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MILK AND MEAT

TWENTY-FOUR SERMONS

BY

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"As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby." I. PETER 2 : 2.

"But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age." HEBREWS 5 : 14.

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TO

All who love the Lord Jesus Christ

AND HIS BOOK.

CONTENTS.

		PAGE
I.	The New Birth	1
II.	The Way and Work of Life	18
III.	Spiritual Sleep	28
IV.	How to Save the City	39
V.	The Gospel Feast	52
VI.	The Revival We Need	65
VII.	An Unfortunate Marriage	77
VIII.	The Blessedness of Giving	87
IX.	Comfort for the Weak	96
X.	Stirring the Nest	112
XI.	Perennial Easter	120
XII.	Chariots and Mantles	133
XIII.	The Unfailing Barrel and Cruse	144
XIV.	Treasures in Heaven	150
XV.	Shadow and Substance	161
XVI.	Discipleship	173
XVII.	Constraining Love	185
XVIII.	Pure Religion	197
XIX.	A Growing Faith	207
XX.	Dew and Lion	223
XXI.	Angels and Hornets	233
XXII.	Voices from Calvary	245
XXIII.	Christ's Earthly Glory	254
XXIV.	God's Ideal of Character	260

MILK AND MEAT.

I.

THE NEW BIRTH.

"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."—JOHN 3 : 7.

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."—JOHN 3 : 14, 15.

THE *how* of everything is mysterious. The "must be" of everything is plain. I do not know *how* fire burns, but I know that fire must burn if the world is to be warmed.

I do not know how corn and cotton grow; but I know that corn and cotton must grow if the world is to be fed and clothed. I do not know *how* taking food makes my blood

red and gives strength and vitality to nerve and muscle; but I know that I must take food if I would live. I do not know *how* I am born again; but I know that I *must be* if I ever get to Heaven. "Marvel, Nicodemus, at the *how* just as much as you please; it is like the wind blowing. Listen! You can hear the sound in the trees, but you know not whence it cometh, or whither it goeth. Wonder at the *how*, but wonder not at the 'must be.' You cannot enjoy Heaven, unless you are born again; you are not fitted for the place." Wicked men do not like Christian company here and they will not like it a whit better in Heaven. They do not like to be where Christ is talked about, His praises sung, and His will obeyed; and if they should go to Heaven, where nothing else is done, they would feel very miserable.

On the Bothnia, in mid-Atlantic, there were three hundred delegates going to the Sunday-school Convention in London. Mr. Blake, of Chicago, put a great map before the delegates, representing the resurrection of Christ, and its relations to history and doctrine. A Jew, one of the passengers, as soon

as he saw the name of Christ and the resurrection, began to grow red in the face, and went bustling to the captain to say that it was an insult to him and his people. Now, suppose that Jew, just as he was, should be translated to Heaven, where Christ is the centre of song, and where His resurrection is the theme of conversation. Would he be any happier than he was on the Bothnia? He would break up the choir if he could. Imagine him rushing up to Gabriel, making complaint that the saints and angels are singing of Christ and the resurrection! A man in Boston bought a ticket to a race-course, and by mistake got on a boat going to a camp-meeting, where he was among Methodist preachers, singing hymns, talking about the Bible, and speaking of their Christian experience. He came to the captain and said: "Captain, I was never so near perdition in my life. I will give you ten dollars to let me out at the nearest place." Put that gambler in Heaven,—would he be happy? No, indeed. Good surroundings cannot make bad men happy. Unless there be a taste for spiritual things, spiritual surroundings are not happiness. "Ye must be born again." Those

who love whiskey will not find a bar-room even on the back streets of Heaven. For all who roll sin as a sweet morsel under their tongues there will be no course of sin at the celestial banquet.

With these introductory words we come to the subject of the new birth. It is our purpose first to correct some mistakes concerning it, then to define it in God's own words, and, finally, to show how any one who will may be born again.

I. As to the Mistakes.

The new birth is not getting religion. You have that. There is not a man in the world who is not a religious being. The religious instinct marks us off from the brute. Men worship God or money or their friends or themselves, and they become assimilated to the object of their worship. Some are just about as hard in heart as the yellow gold they have been worshipping for the last twenty-five years. The mother takes her child and flings it to the crocodile. It is her religion that makes her do it. You see a man by the

highway in India with his arm erect, and he has been standing for twenty years in that position. His arm has grown rigid and hard. He has religion; and it is his religion that makes him hold up his arm till it becomes almost as hard as wood. Yonder goes another man walking with spikes in his feet, and he has started out on a journey of not less than twenty miles. Bloody tracks are behind him. That man has too much religion.

Religion in itself is not the new birth. Going into a church and sitting down where it is quiet and warm and beautiful, looking at frescoing and architecture, feeling sweet, sensuous impressions steal through you—all that may exist without the new birth. It is natural religion.

And expressing your deep religious feelings in a gorgeous ritual is not the new birth. Nicodemus, the Pharisee, was one of the most religious men of his time. He fasted twice a week—better than some of us do. Better still, he gave tithes of all that he possessed. He made long prayers, standing on the street-corners. He made broad his phylactery. He was full of religion from head to foot. He

was a sort of deacon in the church of that day. Many of the Pharisees were hypocrites; they were ritualists; but they were religious. Religion, I repeat, is not the new birth. Every man is a religious being.

The new birth is not a change of feeling. The word *feeling* is mentioned but three times in the New Testament. Feelings can be changed even by the weather or the state of health. I know a man who is never religious except when he is under the influence of drink. Just as soon as he gets drunk, he mounts his cart on the street and preaches the sermon he heard the Sunday before. Three ounces of alcohol can make a man entirely different, so far as his feelings are concerned.

Now, understand me, I believe in feeling. Feeling may go before the new birth. It may follow the new birth. But th. feeling itself and the change of feeling is not the essence and substance of the new birth. Let me illustrate. I was preaching in a country church during August. The thermometer marked about 95 degrees, and the house was densely crowded. The people were standing in the aisles and all around the wall. At the close

of the service, according to the custom of the place, I invited those who wanted Christians to pray for them to come up and take the front seats. About forty out of the crowd pressed their way up to the front. Their friends gathered around them to talk and pray with them. While I was talking to a man on his knees, I felt my head grow dizzy. I said to myself, "I must get out of here; the atmosphere is too close." As I walked out the door, and met a good fresh gust of air coming in from the forest, I felt a thrilling sensation tingling to my finger tips. I felt like a new man from head to foot. It was a purely physical change, that was itself changed again by different surroundings; but it was the kind of change that I once sought for religion.

Have all the feeling you please, weep as many tears as you please, be as happy as you please; but these are accompaniments of the new birth, not the new birth itself.

The new birth is not a change of relation with men. Morality is right relation with men. Spirituality is right relation with God. A man may be all right with his fel-

lows, and all wrong with God. When a man gets right with God, he is right with man every time. The main purpose of Paul's letter to the Romans was to prove that righteousness, primarily, is right relation, and not right doing. It is getting right with God, and then doing right. There is no possibility of salvation without our first getting right with God. I know some men who can boast that they do not beat their wives; that they are out of the penitentiary,—do not lie, and cheat, and steal, and do bad things generally. They are upright citizens; all right with their families, but all wrong with God. In the city of Brooklyn, two or three years ago, a detective went into a drug-store, laid his hand upon the shoulder of a man about thirty years of age, and said, "You are wanted." "What do you mean?" asked the man. "You know what I mean. You were in the Albany penitentiary several years ago; you escaped and went West. You married out there, and came back here and settled; and we have been on your track ever since. Now we have you. You need not deny it." He said, "That is true; I won't deny it: but I would like to go

home and say good-by to my wife and child." "All right." They went to his home. He met his wife and little child in the parlor, and said: "Wife, haven't I been a kind husband? Haven't I been a good father, and worked hard to make a living?" She replied, "Yes; what do you mean?" "I mean that I am an escaped convict from the penitentiary. Since I met you, your love for me has made a different man out of me; but I am an escaped criminal, and must go back to the penitentiary." He was all right with his wife, child, and neighbors, but all wrong with the State of New York. His being right with his wife and child did not put him right with the State of New York. You may be all right with your friends and neighbors, but all wrong with God; and, unless you are born again, you never can get right with God.

II. The New Birth Defined.

But what is the new birth? Turn to 2 Pet. 1:4, and you have a good definition: "That ye might be partakers of the Divine nature."

That's it. To be born of God is to become a partaker of the Divine nature. The divinity of Christ partook of our humanity. Our humanity partakes of His divinity. We are made sons of God, and the son has the same nature as the Father. Jesus Christ was born a babe in Bethlehem, and we become babes in Christ.

The new birth is the imparting of the Christly nature to the human soul, and is brought about by the Holy Spirit. We have nothing to do with it at all: that is God's part of the business.

I do not know how my eating beefsteak will keep me alive, and yet I confess that I ate as heartily this morning as if I knew all about it, for the simple reason that my part of the transaction was quite simple. Those who make up their minds that they will not do anything they cannot understand all about, will soon be in a lunatic asylum or in their graves. A prominent man in the Southern States, a college president, made up his mind, after poring over scientific books, that he would not eat or drink until he could explain the relation between life and matter. That

man was sent to a lunatic asylum. The superintendent put him in a strait-jacket, and told him that he had to take something, whether he could understand it, or not. And he treated him right. Many people are mystified about the new birth, because they want to do God's part.

III. Man's Part.

What, then, is our part? Jesus explains it to Nicodemus in the second text: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." As if Christ had said: "Now, Nicodemus, you are a Jew, and are conversant with Jewish history. You remember that scene in the wilderness, do you not, when the people were bitten by fiery serpents, and God told Moses to make a piece of brass into the shape of a serpent and put it on a pole in the midst of the camp, and then proclaim to the people that whoever would look at that serpent of brass should be healed of the bite of the poisonous serpent? Nico-

demus, My part of the new birth is to heal, and your part is to look."

> "There is life for a look at the Crucified One,
> There is life at this moment for thee;
> Then look, sinner, look unto Him, and be saved,
> Unto Him who was nailed to the tree."

The part that we are to do, then, is child-like — almost childish. God made it child-like and simple, that it might be within the capacity of the philosopher and the fool, of the learned man and the ignorant, of the old and the young, of the strong and the weak; that salvation in its great scope might be as wide and as high as the greatest university training, and in its simplicity as low as the cradle in the nursery. He says, "Look to Jesus!" He makes it simple, direct, and plain. "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God and there is none else."

It was not looking at the pole. I do not know what sort of a pole it was. Perhaps Moses went out and cut the roughest old stick he could find, all gnarled and covered with bark, and put the serpent up on it; or he

might have made it as smooth and trim as a carpenter's knife could make it.

There are some people who look to the pole, and expect to be saved by it. The ordinances of the church are simply the pole upon which Christ is uplifted. Baptism is the pole that holds up the burial and resurrection of Jesus. The church itself is the pole uplifting Christ. Every member of the church ought to be like a pole uplifting Christ, and asking men to look and live. It is not looking to baptism. You may be baptized in the waters of the Jordan, and be lost. Blood unmixed with water cleanses from all sin. It is your duty to obey Christ in baptism, but it is not the channel through which salvation comes. The church is a good thing, and you ought to join the church; but it is simply the pole. Trusting to the church never saved anybody. No ordinance, no organization, can bring about that experience in the human heart.

Nor does it depend upon the light in which you are looking. I can imagine a man bitten, and he sees the serpent run off in the rocks. He feels the poison coursing through

his veins, and his head begins to grow dizzy. He says, "I must go and look at the serpent of brass." There, in the distance, it is glittering in the noonday sun. From one hill-top he sees it on the other hill-top, and just the moment he looks, he is healed. Here comes another man in the gloaming of the evening; the shades of night have gathered, and he must come close, that in the misty darkness he may get a view of the serpent of brass. As he looks he is healed. Here is a man that comes in the moonlight, with its beautiful sheen over hill and valley; he has to come closer still, and there, in the moonlight, he gets a view of the serpent of brass; the moment he looks he is healed. Here comes another in the starlight, and he comes so close that he must have the serpent of brass between him and the bright starry sky yonder; as he looks he is healed. Here comes another man in the darkness of midnight; perhaps a storm is raging, and in the lightning flash he gets a view of the serpent; he is healed. Another comes with a flickering lamp and must hold it up close to the serpent of brass; but he looks by the light of

the flickering lamp, and is healed. No matter, I repeat, about the kind or degree of light in which you look. "They came to Christ from every quarter," but they came; and getting to Christ is salvation. Looking to Christ, believing in Christ, is our part of the new birth, whatever be the light in which we look.

Here is one man that comes in the noonday splendor of good health and prosperity; but he knows he is bitten, and as he looks to Christ he is saved. Here comes another amid the gathering shadows of sorrow, perhaps of life itself. But he looks amid the shadows, and he is saved. There comes a man in the light of some Christian's experience, in the light of some book, which like the moon reflects the word of God,—in the light of some Christian character, that has in it the reflection of the Sun of righteousness, and, looking in this reflected light, he is saved. Here comes another, who believes there are some good people. He believes that his mother is in Heaven, because she trusted Jesus. He looks in the darkness, and only sees by the light of a star or two; but he looks, and is saved. Here comes another man—oh, how many have

thus come with the storm raging and lightning flashing around them!—and in the lightning flash of the storm he gets a look; in a moment he is saved. No matter about the light. Look to Christ, believing in Him as your Saviour, and the moment you believe—God's word for it—you are born again. Your part is to believe. God's part is all the rest, about which you have no concern.

We are saved by faith. Everything is. Every good institution is saved by faith. The family is saved by faith. Wipe out faith in husband, wife, and child, and you destroy the home. The government is saved by faith. Let the people lose faith in the government, and it will topple about their ears. Commerce is saved by faith. You banking men know how it is. Let the people lose faith in a bank, and that bank soon crashes. In an English town a report got out that the bank was about to fail. Five hundred people ran for their deposits on the same day. The pastor of the dissenting church in the town was invited by the bank directors to meet them. They said to him, "Sir, if these people press us to the wall,

they will lose their money. If they don't press us, we will pay every dollar." The pastor said, "I will help you; I have some money, and I trust you." He went home, got his money, came to the bank door, and, standing on the step, said, "Friends, you all know me; I have been living here twenty-five years, and I believe in this bank. Here are three hundred pounds that I am going to deposit. I believe the bank is good." In less than thirty minutes every one of those people had dispersed, and the bank was saved by faith. Unbelief as to that bank was about to ruin it. The moment faith was implanted, the bank was saved. Railroads are saved by faith. Steamboats are saved by faith. Your business, friend, is saved by faith. Every good thing on earth is saved by faith. And when the infidel rails at the religion of Jesus Christ because we are saved by faith, he is railing at every institution that this country holds dear. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

II.

THE WAY AND WORK OF LIFE.

"Looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God."—JOHN I : 36.

BEHOLDING CHRIST AS THE LAMB OF GOD IS THE WAY OF LIFE.

Not a Creed.—Creeds, as expressions of our faith, are good enough in their place, but the man who makes a creed take the place of Christ is like the patient who eats the prescription while he rejects the medicine. There is as much difference between Christ and a creed as there is between a man and his biography. Creeds, like baskets, may hold luscious fruit; and we would not dispense with the baskets, but as an article of diet baskets are not good. We need vessels to hold water, but the vessels themselves will not quench our thirst.

Not the Church.—The church is for saved people; the way of life is God's door into it. After

we have beheld the Lamb of God, we should join the church; but no sadder mistake can be made than to regard the church as the ark of safety, the city of refuge for the soul. There is a vast difference between a post and a tree. Those who enter the church, that they may be saved thereby, are like posts without life, planted in the earth. Time rots them, and they fall down; while those who enter the church, because they have been saved, are like trees full of life, planted by the river of water, whose leaf shall not wither.

Not Ordinances.—Ordinances are the symbols of truth. The Lord's Supper is the shadow of Christ, the Lamb. Baptism is a picture of the burial and resurrection of our Lord. But looking at a picture of food does not satisfy hunger; looking at a picture of water does not quench thirst.

Not an Experience.—Beholding the Lamb of God gives an experience; as a result we have love, hope, and all the Christian graces, but these are the fruits of the Spirit, and not the object of our faith. They are good proofs that we are saved, but, looking to the work of the Spirit in us should not displace the work of Christ for us.

The Spirit and Jesus are no rivals. The Spirit would have us look away from Himself to the Lamb of God whom He delights, while He hides Himself, to hold before the eyes of all.

Not beholding Christ as merely a Teacher, Philanthropist, or Example.—It is popular in some quarters nowadays to exalt the life of Christ at the expense of His death. It is the religion of Cain, with his fruits and flowers, without the blood. It is an attempt to cover over the offence of the cross with the attributes of the man Christ Jesus. It is an exaltation of the man at the expense of the Lamb. I would be second to none in praising the perfection of the character of Christ, and in desiring to grow into His full stature; but, in order that we may be like Him, we must first get rid of sin that has defaced our characters, and "without the shedding of blood there is no remission." Calvary is the alphabet of Christianity. We must start at the cross, if we would reach the crown. Grasping for the crown, while we ignore the cross, is a sort of pious theft.

THE WORK OF LIFE IS TO MAKE ONE'S PERSONALITY A VOICE PROCLAIMING THE WAY OF LIFE.

The people asked John, "Who are you?" His reply was, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness." Not, I have a voice, although he had one strong enough doubtless to preach to twenty thousand people in the open air, but he said, "I am the voice;" my whole personality, all that is meant by "John the Baptist," is a voice crying in the desert "Make straight the way of the Lord." Our work in life, after we have beheld the Lamb of God, is to be a John the Baptist calling men to the Christ. We should in all our relations voice the saying, "Behold the Lamb of God." Now the practical question is, How can we do this? In four ways.

1. *By our Words.*—The man who is a voice of God will use the voice he has for God. Those of us who hear God will speak His word, and our ability to speak will depend upon our ability to hear. When a man loses his hearing, he loses his speech. The deaf are always dumb, and the man who fails to hear God as he speaks in Reve-

lation will not speak for God. We who have heard Him should speak forth the hope that is in us.

Our business is "by all means to save some." We may do other things, but they are incidentals. As you walk down the corridor of the Astor House toward the restaurant, you will see standing in the door a man who never looks into your face; he always looks at your shoes. That man's business is to black shoes, and I have never seen him look into the face of a guest. His one thought is about the condition of the shoes. A life-insurance agent told me that he never saw a respectable man who did not suggest to him a policy. His business was to get policies. Every person we meet should suggest salvation. Is he a Christian? Can I speak a word now that may change his life? Such a man was John Wesley, and his followers have to a large extent drunk in his spirit. Wesley was robbed once by a highwayman, and, as he handed to him his scanty purse, he said, "Sir, you may some time repent of this, and if you ever do, remember, The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth from all sin." Several years afterwards a man took Wesley by the hand as he came out of

church and said, "Do you remember the time you were robbed in a certain place?" "Yes," said Wesley, "I shall never forget that." "Well, I was the man that robbed you, and the words you spoke to me made me a Christian and an honest man." I have not heard whether or not he returned the money to Wesley; he ought to have done so, if he did not; but the point I wish to make is, that Wesley was Christian enough to think more of saving that man's soul than of keeping his purse.

2. *By our Business.*—Every man's business should be a voice proclaiming Christ. It cannot be such, if it is a bad business; and, however good in itself, if it is conducted on bad principles, it is never the voice of God. A gentleman telegraphed to a friend asking what a certain man was worth. The reply was, "His note is worth a million dollars, but his word is not worth a cent." You will not be surprised to learn that, before very long, his note was as worthless as his word. That man's business went to wreck, because it was not founded upon principles of honesty. "What are you doing there?" asked a neighbor, as he came into the shop where a Chris-

tian blacksmith with strong arm was beating the white iron upon the anvil and making the sparks fly in every direction. "I am preaching the gospel to the regions beyond," he replied, as he continued to swing his heavy hammer. His was a holy calling; the ring of his hammer was as sweet to God as an angel's harp, and that smoky shanty was a palace in which God delighted. So every man's business may be made a voice proclaiming the Lamb of God.

3. *By our Money.*—Princess Eugenie, of Sweden, sold her diamonds, that she might build a home for incurables. On one of her visits to the home she met a wicked, sick woman, to whom she talked about Christ. She told the matron on leaving that she hoped special attention would be given to that poor creature, for the Princess was anxious that before she died she should become a Christian. One day she found the invalid with bright face, because her heart was radiant with hope, and, as she took her by the hand, the tears gathered in her sunken eyes. The Princess said to her husband on returning to the palace, "I saw the glitter of my diamonds to-day in the tears of penitence."

"But," you say, "I am no princess with diamonds for sale." A newsboy was run over in New York a few weeks ago by a vehicle, and carried, mangled in body, to the hospital. As soon as his mother came in, he pointed to his little vest lying upon a chair, and said, "Mother, there are four cents in my pocket that I got for selling papers before I was hurt; I made them for you. Don't forget to take them." That boy's spirit of ministry to his mother is as bright as the glitter of Eugenie's diamonds. The two-fifths of a cent that the poor widow put into the treasury may, in the view of angels, have a brighter flash than all the diamonds of earth, for they have the brilliancy of trust and consecration.

4. *By our Character.*—Above all things, our character must be a voice proclaiming the Lamb of God. Our words spoken, printed and written, our business, our money, will not atone for the lack of a clear Christian character. "What we need," says some one, "is not more men, but more *man.*" The manifestation of Christian character is the crying need in this age and all ages. I saw two portraits in the National Art Gallery in London,

under one of which was the title "A Man," under the other "A Woman." They were meant to express the artist's ideal of manhood and womanhood, and, as I gazed upon them, I thought it is better to be a man than a king, a true woman than a queen.

After the battle of Lutzen, in which Gustavus Adolphus was slain in the hour of victory, all Stockholm and the other cities of Sweden were in mourning. The representatives gathered from far and near, in order to consider what now should be done. There was talk about a Venetian Republic, and some said that Sweden should be given to the King of Poland, who was a cousin of Adolphus; but Oxenstiern, the Grand Chancellor, stood before the assembly and said, "Let there be no talk of a Venetian Republic, or Polish kings, for we have in our midst the heir of the great Gustavus, his little girl, who is six years of age." Larson, a peasant representative, replied abruptly, "How do we know, Oxenstiern, that this is not a trick of yours, to cheat us out of our rights? We have never seen this heir. We do not know that Gustavus has a child." "Wait a minute," replied Oxenstiern, "and I will show you."

He soon brought into the room Christina, the little six-year-old daughter of the king, and lifting her up, placed her in the throne, where only rulers of Sweden were allowed to sit. Larson pressed his way up close, gazed for a moment into her face, and then, turning around to the assembly, said, "Brethren, I see in the countenance of this child the features of the great Gustavus. Look at her nose, her eyes, her chin: she is the child of our king." "Yes," replied Oxenstiern, "and she has the heart of a soldier, for I saw her clapping her hands and shouting at the booming of the cannon;" and by acclamation she was proclaimed, girl that she was, "Christina, King of Sweden." The world presses very close up to us, scans our every feature, and, if they see in our moral and spiritual make-up the lineaments of the character of Jesus Christ, they will proclaim us children of the King; but if they fail to perceive that we are like Him, they will deny our claim and pronounce us pretenders.

The way of life is to behold the Lamb of God: the work of life is to make ourselves and all we have a voice proclaiming Christ to others.

III.

SPIRITUAL SLEEP.

"Awake, awake ; put on thy strength, O Zion."—Is. 52 : 1.

"TIRED nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep," is essential to the health and vigor of body and mind. But our moral and spiritual natures need no sleep. Love, faith, hope, humility need never slumber. Hence in Heaven we will be able to serve God day and night. The spiritual will have the supremacy. The untiring will be forever active.

In the 9th verse of the previous chapter Israel is trying to wake up Jehovah. "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord." The words of our text is God's answer to that prayer. "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion." "Wake up yourself," says the Lord. "I am not asleep. No attribute of mine needs repose. I am ready, willing, waiting to

exert my power, whenever you fulfil the conditions I have imposed." We have not by prayer or exertion to induce God to bless us. But prayer and exertion God requires for our good. It would be no kindness in Him to bless sleeping Christians. They would not know it, if He did. Let us inquire:

I. What are the Signs of Sleep?
II. What are the Causes of Sleep?
III. Why should we Awake?

I. The Signs of Sleep.

Inactivity.—If a man remains motionless on a lounge for three or four hours, I take it for granted that he is asleep. If he should continue in that motionless condition for three or four days, I should pronounce him dead. If a Christian does nothing for Christ, he is asleep. If he persists in his course of uselessness, it is a fair presumption that he is no Christian at all. Life will express itself. "By their fruits ye shall know them." And the ability to sleep is not one of the fruits. If we suspect that a friend, a long while asleep, is dead, we put our ear to his side and listen for

the heart-beat and breathing. The movement of heart and lungs indicates that life is not extinct. And so we put the test to some Christians who really appear to be dead. A close examination shows that they have the heart-beat of faith in Christ, love for his word and people. They breathe prayer and praise. They are simply asleep, and some of them have the Rip Van Winkle power of long continuance in slumber. It is a pity that a close examination should ever be necessary to distinguish their sleep from death. Were they doing their duty, no one would have a doubt on the subject.

Insensibility to Slight Impressions. — If I wished to learn whether a man were asleep, I would not fire a cannon over him. Awake or asleep, he would be aroused by that. I would whisper to him, or touch him gently. The fact that you are startled by the cannon boom of great crime, that you shudder at the thought of theft, murder, or lying, is no proof that you are awake. But how are you affected by what the world calls little sins? Things that are not criminal, but simply worldly, doubtful, unscriptural, un-

Christlike? The Christian who can indulge without compunction of conscience what may do harm in the way of weakening his influence or causing his brother to stumble is asleep. The man who refuses to obey Christ, just because that act of obedience does not give him Heaven, is asleep. Disobedience of any kind makes the wide-awake Christian smart with pain.

Dreams. — Sleep produces dreams. And there is a kind of dreaming that is good for us. It is well to dream of doing great things for God and humanity. Such castles in the air have become solid structures. But the dreaming which expresses itself in idle speculations and mystical reverie is a sure sign of sleep. The paradise of such dreamers is the book of Revelation. They love to ride its horses, fly with its eagles, and revel with the spirits of its mysterious visions. To them they are not mysteries. Strange things often appear perfectly plain in dreams. The wide-awake preacher will be practical; while he does not despise prophesying, he prefers to deal in the plain rather than the mysterious. He is awake to the needs of the people to

whom he ministers, and seeks all the time to do them good. It is not uncommon for a sleeping Christian to have a nightmare. He gorges himself with some infidel book or magazine, and no wonder he feels the weight of a black mountain of doubt pressing upon him. Giant Despair, with his foot upon his breast, is crushing the life out of him. If you fill your mental stomach with such pork and cabbage, you may expect to suffer the consequences.

Ill-directed Effort. — People talk and walk in their sleep, but it is all to no purpose. Their talk is incoherent, and their walk without aim. When pastor and people, with all their preaching and activities, have no blessing, it is because they are asleep.

II. Causes of Sleep.

Inactivity. — The sign may in turn be a cause. One is not apt to go to sleep while he is moving about. I know a good deacon who leads a very active life during the week, but, when he becomes quiet in church, he usually goes to sleep in about fifteen minutes. I

never knew him to fall asleep while busy on the street or in his office. A Christian active in winning souls will not go to sleep. His very activity will keep him awake. My drowsy brother, if you would not go to sleep, bestir yourself. Go to work. Exercise your mental, moral, and spiritual limbs.

Atmosphere. — Certain climates put people to sleep. The sleepy disease of Africa has been fatal to thousands. But one need not go to Africa to be put to sleep by the atmosphere. An ill-ventilated room will send us to dreamland in a few minutes. A change from the sea-coast to the mountains or from the mountains to the sea-coast, strange to say, makes us drowsy. No one knows what there is in such pure atmosphere that produces sleep. So there are moral and social atmospheres that seem to be very good, but Christians who go into them fall asleep. Prove to me that the atmosphere of the theatre and the ball-room and the club is as good as a prayer-meeting; that first-class people go to these places; that men and women whose characters are above reproach patronize them: the fact remains that these good people are,

as Christians, sound asleep. They are not awake to winning souls, converting the heathen, building up the church. They come to church on Sunday like people rubbing their eyes and trying to rouse from sleep long enough to hear something that is being said to them, and then fall back upon their pillows, dead asleep again. The church full of such excellent people would be a dormitory, and a dormitory for all practical purposes is about as good as a graveyard. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and rise from the dead."

There is a coldness, if nothing else, in these atmospheres that induces sleep. The sensation of freezing to death is delightful, and causes little alarm to the man who is under its magic spell. Mr. Egerton Young, missionary among the Indians of the far North, told me that he had once the experience of freezing. He heard sweetest music, while everything about him was draped in the colors of the rainbow. He could hardly resist the temptation to drop down in the snow as into a luxurious couch, and go to sleep. Startled by the thought that he was freezing to death, he adopted a heroic remedy. He tied the tail-rope of his sled fast

around his waist and gave his dogs the word to go, and off they went, dragging him through the snow and bumping him against every hard thing in the way, till the blood began to circulate. Then the process of resuscitation was as painful as freezing was delightful. He felt as if a hot awl were in every nerve. To you who are in the first stage of freezing, because you have been so long in an atmosphere 60 degrees below zero, the waking process may not be pleasant. But it is better to wake up and feel bad than to sleep on and die to all that is good and useful.

III. Let us look now at the Reasons why we should Wake up.

It is Harvest Time. — Christ looked out upon the fields and declared that they were ripe, waiting for the sickle. To-day the fields are larger, and the grain just as ripe. A day in harvest is worth many days at any other time of the year. The ripe grain may be lost for the lack of reapers. "He that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame." Shame, shame on the farmer who snoozes under the

shade of the trees, while his ripe wheat is falling and being trampled under foot. He is a disgrace to the honorable profession of farming. Shame, shame, a thousandfold, on the Christian who sleeps on and takes his rest, while the fields in which he might reap many golden sheaves are all around him, and the grain that invites his sickle is being trampled upon by the hoofs of infidelity and sin.

It is a Time of War, and the Enemy is always awake.—While we sleep, the citadels of truth are being taken. Our very children are made captives by the enemy. We have read a grim story in which Satan is said to have sent some of his minions from the bottomless pit for the purpose of doing all the harm they could. On their return one of them reported that he had overtaken a company of Christians in a storm and destroyed them by sinking their vessel. "You did no harm," said Satan, "for they all went straight to Heaven." Another had set fire to property and destroyed much wealth that belonged to Christians. "You may have done no harm," continued Satan, "for their losses make them all the more determined to fight against us." Finally,

one reported that he had succeeded in putting to sleep a large number of Christians. Then Satan smiled, and all the host of devils shouted their approval. The legend has in it the awful truth that nothing can do the cause of Christ more harm than for His people to go to sleep.

We are Watchmen, put by the Lord on the Walls to give the People Warning.—Sleep is treason. For the private soldier to sleep in the midst of battle is bad enough, but for the sentinel on whom depends the safety of the army to sleep at his post is criminal. And doubly criminal is it, when those we love are in danger. A father walked out through his fields with his little bright-eyed boy, and laid down to rest in an inviting shade. He fell asleep, while the child played in the grass around him. But on waking he could not see the boy. He called, and only echo answered. Frantic with dread, he rushed to the edge of a precipice, and saw on the rocks below the mangled form of his darling child. Could he ever forgive himself for sleeping, when he ought to have known the nearness of danger? Father, mother, that may be your portrait. Are you at ease in mind,

sound asleep, while your children are sporting on the edge of the precipice of infidelity, drunkenness, or worse? Wake up, and seek their salvation.

Asleep we are Weak.—A pigmy awake is stronger than a giant asleep. The wide-awake Christian is a channel through which the omnipotence of God pours itself. "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O sleeping man of God." Go into the harvest field. Take part in the battle that is waging, and, clothed in the power of God Himself, be invincible.

IV.

HOW TO SAVE THE CITY.

"So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."—ACTS 19 : 20.

THE problem of the cities has interested the church in all ages. Christ sent forth His disciples, two by two, into every city. He went and preached in their cities. He began the world's evangelization in a great city. The cities redeemed means the world redeemed.

There are to-day many organizations for the betterment of our cities. Some believe that education is all that is needed, and they spend their time and money in establishing schools. Others think that the curse of our cities is poverty, and they organize anti-poverty societies. And others believe that the only hope of saving the cities is to begin with the children; hence all kinds of efforts for reaching

the little ones. Many others magnify environment, and believe that the thing to be done is to improve our tenement-houses, and put better surroundings about the poor. With the spirit of all these institutions we are in hearty sympathy, and we would not hinder one of them in their work. They are doing good, and are needful. Every philanthropic effort that at all ameliorates the condition of the poor we should support.

But in this discourse it is our purpose to point out the apostolic method of evangelizing the cities. We find it in the 19th chapter of "The Acts," and the secret of the method is given in verse 20: "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." Paul's dependence was the word of God, and it prevailed by a process of growth. Growth implies life. There was a living power which accompanied the word.

Let us consider:

I. The Method by which it Grew;

II. The Forces against which it Prevailed.

I. The Method.

Apollos had preached at Ephesus the baptism of John. The church there had not so much as heard of the Holy Spirit. Apollos was cultured and eloquent, a very magnetic man, and drew these people about his personality. We have a great many churches built up in our cities upon the magnetic personalities of men. People flock to hear them because of their rare eloquence. Such churches are influential, but powerless. They gather crowds, and reach the masses without building up a spiritual church. So the first thing Paul set about was to get this little church at Ephesus endued with power. He laid his hands upon them, and they received the Holy Spirit. Just what relation the imposition of hands had to the gift of the Holy Spirit I hardly know. But Jesus gives us the method in another place: "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" We may have the Spirit of power for the asking. This was the method pursued before

Pentecost. The disciples met in an upper room to ask for the fulfillment of the promise of the Spirit's coming. And no great revival has ever come upon a city which was not preceded by hours and days, perhaps weeks, of prayer. Common-sense suggests this course. If we wish to kindle a fire, we first put on the paper, then the wood, and, after these combustibles have caught, we put on the coal. The church within the church who believe in prayer are the tinder ready to receive the fire of the Holy Spirit. Revival work is not an explosion, but a combustion, a conflagration.

As a result of this, the tongues of the little church were untied; they all became prophets; every one was a preacher of the glad tidings. Christians need to forget the distinction between clergy and laity, while all seek to win men to trust and love Jesus Christ.

The next step was to preach continuously for three months in a building devoted to religious uses. Paul went into the synagogue and spoke boldly, "reasoning and persuading as to the things concerning the kingdom of God." The synagogue held the most religious

body that could be found. Next to the little church that Apollos had gathered, those who attended the synagogue were the best material upon which to work. They were formal, cold, lifeless; but when the little church, full of power, was brought among them, their formality vanished, their coldness was melted, and they were quickened into spiritual activity. Let but a handful of earnest Christians in a large church become full of the Holy Spirit, and they will soon impart their fervor to the rest of the membership.

The third step was to hold a protracted meeting every day for over two years in a purely secular building. After the dissension in the synagogue, Paul took those who were in sympathy with him to the lecture-room of Tyrannus. Who Tyrannus was I do not know; doubtless a popular teacher of rhetoric, with a large hall in the centre of Ephesus. In this hall for two years Paul preached daily, until all Asia heard the word of God. It may be that the reputation of Tyrannus extended over all Asia, and the fact that Paul was in this popular public place gave him an opportunity of preaching the gospel to the

whole country. Ephesus was the commercial New York of Asia. Arteries of commerce ran from this great city into every surrounding province.

If we will examine the methods of revivals, we will see that they were begun and carried on in this apostolic fashion. Begin with Pentecost: first, a little handful gather around Christ, who teaches them for two or three years; then a larger company in the upper room praying and waiting; and then the great crowd, of whom three thousand were converted in one day.

The great revival under Whitefield and Wesley began and was carried on after the same fashion. First, a little handful of students, the "Holy Club" at Oxford, then a larger number in a foundry of London, and then great throngs at Smithfield. So McAll's work was begun and carried on in Paris. At first only he and his wife on fire with the Holy Spirit, then a larger number gathered about them, and now one hundred secular halls in which the gospel is preached every day.

So began and grew the work of the Salvation Army. At first only Booth and his wife and a

small company of sympathizers, then a larger number, and now girdling the world with their stations. It is beginning with the combustible material and letting the fire spread. It is the church getting ready by waiting upon God, and then going out where the people are and preaching to them the gospel with power. If I wanted to burn up this city, I should not try to set fire first to a safe-deposit vault, but I would look for a more combustible building. If we are to have a conflagration of revival zeal, the fire must begin in the hearts of a few.

II. The Foes.

1. *The Religious People who did not believe in "the Way."*—The way which Paul preached was "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." His message was the simple gospel of the grace of God. He endeavored first to bring men into right relation with God, believing that such was the best way to bring them into right relation with each other. And we are told that some in the synagogue spake evil of *the way.* They

did not believe in this simple gospel method. They thought there were other ways better, or just as good. They might have suggested a course of lectures by Tyrannus in his own lecture-room, in which the gospel was not to be prominent. Taking the people by guile was, to them, the shortest way. Paul, however, insisted on *the* way, and persisted along that line. The people to-day who are the greatest obstacles to a revival are the religious people in our churches who really do not believe in the power of the gospel. They would substitute other good things for it. Some of them talk about beginning to save a man a hundred years before he is born. To them the gospel which revolutionizes is effete. They have lost sight of the arm that wields the "sword of the Spirit." Preaching the simple gospel of reconciliation to them is folly. They are in advance of that; they look upon it as old-fogyish, and, of all the forces in the church, these religious people of good character who oppose the apostolic way of salvation are the greatest obstacles.

2. *Imitators of the Good.*—There was a band of Jews under Sceva, a renegade high-priest,

who had come to Ephesus to make money by pretending to cast out evil spirits. As soon as they saw that the name of Jesus on the lips of Paul had a magic power, they decided at once to appropriate and use it, and their formula was: "I adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preached." The bad men possessed with devils, however, had no sympathy with these imitators. "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?" was the reply. Imitators are to-day in the way of the gospel's success. Almost every religious society takes to itself the name of Jesus, or something that suggests Him. To them it is simply a talismanic word. They do not worship Him nor believe in Him as Saviour and Master, but they would put their pernicious doctrine and often their practices under the cloak of His popularity. They are shams, and wicked men who see through shams despise them; nevertheless they are great obstacles in the way of saving the lost. In this great city, so cieties which call themselves churches, borrowing the word "church" from Christ, and some of them "churches of Christ," deny His divinity, his power to save from sin, His atoning

merit, and everything which makes Him the real Christ that He is. They are simple imitators of those who in heart honor the Lord.

3. *Bad Literature.*—These imitators were very zealous in making and circulating bad books,—books which described their occult arts and gave them standing with the people. But the power of Paul's gospel was so great that the owners of these books were converted, and in a street of Ephesus there was a bonfire such as the small boys had not seen in a long time. Twenty thousand dollars' worth of these books were put in a pile and burned to ashes. Such a cleansing of the literary atmosphere in our great cities is greatly needed. Paul's method of doing it is the best. Not to issue a law against free speech, but to be so full of the Spirit and preach the gospel with such power that editors and authors shall be reached and converted, and made to burn up their own vile publications. What a great blessing it would be if more than one half of the daily papers could be burned up. Their tone is immoral. Some of them have the ethics of the brothel. Paul was so full of the Spirit that everything about him was saturated with His power. The

very handkerchiefs that touched his person carried with them virtue, and, if the preachers and churches of these great cities were thus charged with Almighty power, the men who flood our streets with vile publications would feel the influence of it. Oh for such an infilling of power! It would settle nearly all the questions which agitate our city life.

4. *The Opposition of those whose Business was in Danger by the Success of the Gospel.*—In Ephesus was the great temple of Diana, and there were hundreds, perhaps thousands, of men who made their living by manufacturing and selling little images of this popular goddess. The success of Paul's preaching turned many away from purchasing these wares. The result was a commotion among the craftsmen. Demetrius, doubtless president of the association of idol-makers, called a mass meeting, and protested that this crusade against their business should stop, and he made an appeal for the honor of Diana. Not only their trade was in danger, but the very glory of the goddess of Ephesus was beginning to fade.

In our cities to-day there is a trade which would be overthrown by the success of the

gospel. It is a trade in human homes and hearts and happiness. The temple of Diana in New York and Brooklyn is the liquor traffic. The goddess of this country is Liberty, and those who make their money out of this traffic plead for the honor of their goddess. They claim that they have the liberty to destroy their neighbors. The greatest obstacle in the way of the success of the gospel is this very traffic, and yet, sad to say, many Christian men join them in the cry: "Great is the goddess of Liberty, which allows men to slay their fellows by wholesale." Ye men of God, take your stand on the side of humanity, of purity, of home and heaven, against the mob whose financial interest leads them to oppose the gospel.

I close just where I began. In spite of the religious people in the church who opposed the way, in spite of the imitators, in spite of bad literature, in spite of the opposition of those whose business was in danger, Paul succeeded in reaching and saving many of the Ephesians. And in spite of all the forces arrayed against us in great cities, the churches, if they will, can reach and save multitudes. But in

order to do it in any large measure, the few must first be filled with the Holy Spirit. The church must be filled with power from on high. Her confidence in the gospel as the power of God unto salvation must be unshaken. Men and women must be laid on the altar in the spirit of a truly Christly sacrifice, and then shall begin the fire that will spread to a conflagration.

V.

THE GOSPEL FEAST.

"Come, for all things are now ready."—LUKE 14 : 17.

THE GOSPEL IS A FEAST PREPARED.

WE have not to make ready a single dish. All that we need comes to us freely through Jesus Christ. If we are guilty and plead for pardon, we are forgiven upon His merit. If polluted, we plead for cleansing, the blood of Christ washes away every stain. Are we at unrest? "He is our peace."

Making peace with God is a losing business. Peace has been already made; and what we need is to accept this peace and enter upon its enjoyment. A friend of mine went into the mountains of North Carolina, to spend a few weeks of summer vacation, in the hope that he might get away from the mail, the whistle of

the engine, and everything that reminded him of work. With much difficulty he climbed a high mountain and descended on the other side into a country covered with a dense forest. He thought, to be sure, no one lived in this out-of-the-way place; but what was his surprise to find in the centre of these woods a little cottage surrounded by several acres of cultivated land. On his approach the door was shut, the window closed, and he saw at a glance that the inmates did not intend to admit him. After much pleading, however, the door was opened, and he learned that two men had been living there for nearly three years. They had deserted from the Confederate army, and had gone to this out-of-the-way place, built their cottage, cleared their land, and made up their minds to keep out of the reach of the conscripting officer. They were delighted to learn that the war had been over more than two years, and they were glad to return to their homes. Now, peace had been in existence two years, but these men did not know it, and hence did not enjoy it As soon as they learned of peace, they began to enter upon its enjoyment.

Soldiers, having refused to surrender after

peace had been declared, might have gone to the Black Hills and waged a guerilla warfare against the government. Such are those who, having heard of the peace which Christ has made, refuse to accept it, while they continue their warfare of unbelief.

We have not to keep the peace. "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your minds and hearts through Christ Jesus." The peace keeps us. When a country is bothered with keeping the peace, it is a time of turmoil and unrest, which may end in revolution. When a country is kept by peace—peace reigning like a queen—it is a time of rest, prosperity, and progress. We cannot insist too strongly that the peace of God and all other graces come to us as a gift through Christ Jesus.

The Mission of the Church is to make definite God's General Invitation to the Feast.

The man who made this supper sent his servants to "bid them that were bidden," to invite the invited. His invitation had gone

out some time before; and, now that the time for feasting has arrived, the servants make personal and special this general invitation. The general invitation of "whosoever will" has gone out to mankind. It is our mission to seek the invited and make direct and personal this invitation of God.

A gentleman sat in my congregation one afternoon, distressed about his sins, anxious for salvation. He remained for the inquiry meeting. A young convert, who had never done such a thing before in her life, went to his side, opened the Bible, put her finger upon a promise that had given her comfort, and asked him to read it. As he read, the light came into his mind, the way of life was clear. He accepted Christ, and rejoiced. Now that young convert's mission was to make the promise definite and personal; and her mission is ours. The pastor proclaims the gospel on Sunday. In the nature of the case the proclamation must be more or less general. Let each member of the church feel that he is commissioned in the after meeting, in the home, in the personal intercourse with friends, to make definite this general proclamation of peace.

It is difficult to make an Excuse for not becoming a Christian.

"They began with one consent to make excuse." They had no excuse in hand; it had to be made; and after an excuse for not doing right is made, it is not worth the making. Nearly all excuses are lies guarded; at the heart of them is a falsehood. Their object is to cover the real reason.

The reason why these men did not come to the feast was that they did not want to come. A man comes to you to borrow five hundred dollars. The reason you do not wish to lend it is that you fear he will not repay you. But in giving him an excuse, lest you offend him, if you are not careful, you will tell two or three lies in the attempt.

Let us look a moment at the excuses of these men. One had bought a piece of ground, and he said, "I *must needs* go and see it." Now that was a lie. He had bought the ground, and there was no *need* of his going to see it. The need of seeing came before buying. If he had said, "I have bought the ground and I *will* go

and see it," he might have told the truth. But when he said "I must go," he spoke falsely. In attempting to make our excuses good, we are apt to overshoot the mark, and make them false upon their face.

The second man said "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them." There is a lie in the word "prove." The proving should have taken place before the buying, and his emphasizing the fact that now he must try them after he had bought them shows the weakness of his excuse.

The third said "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." The lie of this excuse is in the word "therefore." He had married a wife, and therefore he ought to have come. It was a time of festivity with him, and he and his bride might have come to enjoy the delightful occasion. But when he gives his marrying as a reason for not coming to a feast, his excuse is false to the core.

But with what politeness two of these men cover up their flimsy excuses! "I pray thee, have me excused." "I pray thee." It is very difficult to reach men who make excuses, and parry you off with politeness. You tell them

that it is time for them to be Christians. They treat you kindly; they are courtesy itself; they would not violate a law of good manners. They simply refuse to come, and their very gentlemanly bearing puts you at a disadvantage with them. I know two or three men with whom I have talked and urged them to become Christians, and they have treated me with such uniform courtesy and kindness that I have felt that it would be a relief if they would get rough and angry—anything to break the monotony of courteous refusal to accept the Lord we love. The last man, who has married a wife, seems to think that he has a little better excuse than the rest, and he can afford not to be polite. So he blurts out gruffly "Therefore I cannot come." He does not say "I pray thee, excuse me." He cares not whether you excuse him or not. He is not coming; that is the end of the matter. But this gruff and discourteous reply carries in it more hopefulness than the smooth-flowing and courteous response of the other men. The man who flatly refuses may be led flatly to accept; while the man who is polite and gentle and forbearing even in his refusal is apt to continue

in that course, which he himself admires, to the very last.

God accepts with Indignation a Bad Excuse, and passes Men by.

Being angry, he said to His servants, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in hither the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind." "Pass by these men who are able to buy land and oxen and marry wives, and go out for those who are too poor to buy land or oxen, or too low and mean for anybody to marry them. Go out into the street and tell every man you meet that the feast is spread, and the Master is waiting for the guests." "Lord, we have done as Thou hast commanded, and yet there is room." "Go now into the highways, out beyond the walls where the gypsies camp, and there you will find some poor creatures without a roof, curled up under the hedges for a night's repose; tell them that there is a place at my table even for them. If they are reluctant to come, you must compel them by earnest persuasion. Do not take an excuse from them, for their need

is so great that, after your entreaty, they will yield and come."

What God does we sometimes feel constrained to do. We must pass by the good, moral man, and seek the outcast. We must pass by those who, we think, would make the best members of the church, and go with our invitation to the very refuse of society. Sad to say, we must sometimes pass by our very children, while we go out after others, not united to us by fleshly ties. Work like this demands that we love people,—not classes or kindred merely,—love like that of Christ, who so loved the whole world that He gave Himself for it.

The great question in commerce is as to the refuse. A large silk manufacturer in London made little profit in his business until he invented a machine that utilized the refuse of his factory, and since then he has had an annual income of over half a million dollars. I have heard that the Standard Oil Company now has an income of nearly two millions as the result of their utilizing the refuse of the refineries. Formerly it was cast out to be burned or buried. It was a dirty, sticky stuff

upon the floor, and was in the way; but a chemical process was discovered by which this unsightly refuse could be transformed into chewing gum, and made palatable even to the taste of refined young ladies.

As with commerce, the great question of the day, social, political, and religious, is concerning the refuse of society. What shall we do with the masses in our great cities, untouched by the church, careless of law, despairing, hungry, and cold? Can the gospel do anything for them? We believe that it is the sovereign remedy, and, when the polite and refined refuse to accept our message, let us rush by them down into the highways and hedges and tell those who are worse off that there is a feast for them which God has prepared. And out of this refuse there will come forth an income to God which we cannot calculate.

The verdict went forth, "None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." Terrible thought that God Himself may leave us to our lying excuses. More terrible thought that God may pass us by and give us over to our own selfish ways. I have known of two cases in which men seemed to have been for-

saken by the Spirit of God, because they refused to accept the invitation that was given by a faithful messenger. One of them was a leading lawyer, prominent in politics, among the first men of his State. A friend of mine pressed upon him the claims of God, and urged him to come to this feast. He treated my friend kindly and politely, saying, "I am too busy; I am now running for Congress; I have on my shoulders the building of a railroad. I know it is an important matter, but I cannot come now." Three years afterwards a messenger rushed into a minister's house, asking him to come and see this lawyer. The preacher saw it was too late to do any good. There he lay, dying of delirium tremens, cursing God with every breath. He deliberately refused to accept the invitation, was allowed to go on in his way, and become fixed in sinful character.

Another friend, a converted Catholic priest, was preaching in a country church, when he noticed a young man with a bright face sitting near the front. After the sermon he went down and asked him if he was a Christian. "No, sir," was the reply, "but I am inter-

ested." "Decide now," urged my friend, "for to delay the matter is dangerous." "Not now," he said, "but I will soon." The meeting continued one week, and the young man persisted in refusing to accept the invitation. My friend went to another church several miles distant, to hold a second meeting, and was surprised to see this same young man in the congregation, but in the back part of the house. He went to him and urged him again to decide for Christ; now he noticed that he was more indifferent, that he spoke of it in rather a light manner. But he came every day during the week and listened attentively. My friend went to a third church several miles distant, and this young man followed him to that meeting, but then he was out in the yard among the scoffers, and, coming into the house late, seemed to take little interest in the preaching. More than a year after this last meeting my friend was called to see that young man die. He sat by his side and tried to urge upon him even now, at this late hour, to accept the invitation to the feast. The young man shook his head sadly and said, "It is too late, sir. Since that

last meeting when I heard you preach, my heart has been as hard as stone. There is no use in praying for me." My friend knelt at his bedside and tried to pray, but he could not help feeling that it was no use. The young man had hardened himself in sin and unbelief, until the very avenues of approach to his soul seemed to have been cut off. The last words he said were, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved."

Young man, I beg you, pass not by this invitation of God so lightly. Make no excuse. Accept at once, and take your place at the table of salvation, where angels themselves are the waiters. Cause not the Lord of mercy to pass you by with anger. Give not His servants pain in feeling that they too must pass you by, while they press on and seek to save others. Accept pardon, peace, and power through Christ, and begin the Christian life, which is a feast and not a funeral. Its joy begun on earth is a foretaste of the eternal joy in heaven.

VI.

THE REVIVAL WE NEED.

"My soul cleaveth unto the dust. Quicken Thou me according to Thy word."—PSALM 119 : 25.

"I am afflicted very much. Quicken me, O Lord, according to Thy word."—PSALM 119 : 107.

"Plead my cause, and deliver me. Quicken me according to Thy word."—PSALM 119 : 154.

THESE scriptures give us three things:

I. The Definition of a True Revival.
II. Our Need of such a Revival.
III. How to Get it.

I. THE TRUE REVIVAL DEFINED.

It is a quickening according to God's word; not according to some man's magnetism or eccentricity. A talented evangelist may swoop down upon a community, and make a stir by sharp, striking sayings, draw large crowds, and

quicken a kind of interest; but such a quickening may be according to the evangelist, not according to the word of God. Now, what we need is an increase of spiritual life along the line of Scripture teaching. A revival means a giving of more life. David had life; what he wished was life more abundantly. We have love for God and men; what we need is more of the same quality; but be sure that it is love according to the word of God. "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." Obedience, not sentimentalism or unctious joy, is love. Such obedience to God will be linked with unselfish ministry to man. A missionary by the name of Crossett died recently in China. He was known among the Chinese as the "Christian Buddha," —the highest title of honor a Buddhist could give him. He chose a life of poverty, because he did not have time to make money. He spent his days and nights with the sick and the poor and the anxious. He led many of them to Christ. He thought not of himself, but of others. He loved men, not because of the ties of kinship or nationality, but because they were men with immortal souls precious

in the sight of God. Such love we need in abundance—a love producing a zeal that consumes us—a love that burdens us for the salvation of men.

Faith.—We need a quickening of faith; faith in the power of the God of Pentecost to convict and convert three thousand in a day. Faith, not in a process of culture, by which we hope to train children into a state of salvation, but faith in the mighty God, who can quicken a dead soul into life in a moment; faith in moral and spiritual revolution rather than evolution.

Conviction.—We need conviction. Looseness is in the air, and we know who the prince of the power of the air is. There is a charity prevalent which rejoices not in the truth. We need men and women who believe something definite, and are willing to live and die for their faith. Is there on earth to-day a John Knox, willing to face Queen Mary and declare to her that she is an idolatress? Is there among our young women an Anne Askew, who, rather than profess what she does not believe, that the real presence is in the wafer, would go to the Tower and have her bones

crushed on the rack, and then from the stake in Smithfield go up to God in a chariot of fire? Is there among our older women an Elizabeth Gaunt, who, while the thumbscrews are on her thumbs and fingers, tightened until the blood spurts, refuses to worship saints and bow down to the Host? Have we any John Philpots and John Rogers left in our ministry, who are willing to burn at the stake rather than give even silent consent to soul-destroying errors? Have we not, on the other hand, a namby-pamby, flabby sort of faith—a jelly-fish conviction, without any backbone? Is not our religion too much like a ball of wax—put into any shape by touch with things about it? We need a revival of religion of solidity and substance—a religion that resists evil and error, and, with the gentleness and faithfulness of Christ, is true to itself and to its Author.

Conscientiousness.—There is a great need also of a revival of conscientiousness—a religion not of the hot-house, which thrives under the heat of song and sermon and services on Sunday, but of sturdy growth, that will flourish in the soil and atmosphere of everyday business. Honest merchants, truthful lawyers,

faithful preachers, loyal citizens, devoted mothers, wives, and husbands, obedient children, industrious workmen, are the needs of to-day and every day. A quickening of conscientiousness that gives a tender conscience and makes us ready to do the right at all hazards, is better than a season of froth and foam of feeling or rapturous joy. The grocer who went home from church and burnt his bushel, because he knew that it was a false measure, received more benefit from the sermon than if he had gone home, clapped his hands, and shouted hallelujah, without thinking of his dishonesty. Such a revival as that will last. It will not be like the beautiful snowflower of Siberia, which comes up through the snow, and perishes in a few hours under the withering blast of evening. The flowers of faith and joy which blossom one day and wither the next are not of the species of the rose of Sharon or the lily of the valley.

II. Our Need of such a Revival.

1. *To Lift us out of the Dust and Help us to Shake off all that Clings to us.*—"My soul

cleaveth unto the dust. Quicken Thou me according to Thy word." Dust is the symbol of earthiness as opposed to heavenly-mindedness. David's soul had an attraction for dust. Drooping or dead things hold dust. It will not stick so easily to living objects; and the cure for this dust magnetism is a larger infusion of life. The sick eagle wallows in the dust; it has not strength of wing to rise and shake it off; but the eagle full of life soars above the dust and gazes into the sun. Christians who are to-day wallowing in the dust of worldliness need an infusion of strong healthy life, that they may "mount up on wings as eagles."

2. *To Sustain us under Life's Burdens.*—"I am afflicted very much; quicken me, O Lord, according to Thy word." Dust mars and hinders life, but it is not heavy. There are Christians not covered with dust, living consecrated lives, who have on them heavy burdens of responsibility, calamity, or sorrow. Such as those need quickening, that they may have strength to bear their burdens. David was afflicted very much, and this word "afflicted" has a wider range than bodily disease. But

he does not pray for a lessening of the burden. What he wants is more life to carry what he has, and to assume larger burdens. Burden-bearing develops a strong, healthy man, while it crushes the weak and sickly. We need more life under these burdens, that they may develop us, rather than crush us.

Responsibility, disappointment, and sorrow make men despair: they give up the conflict sometimes on the very verge of victory, for the lack of life to bear up. A man in California had spent his little fortune seeking gold; every dollar was gone, and he was in debt. Disheartened, demented by his despair, he left his drill one day, went to his cabin, shot his wife and child, and then killed himself. His friends, who pulled up his drill, found on its point the richest kind of ore. If he had held out but a day longer, he would have been rich; and thus we may be on the very verge of great success, and yet fail for the lack of the life that bears disappointment.

3. *To Break all Bonds that Enslave us.*— "Plead my cause. Deliver me. Quicken Thou me according to Thy word." This reveals to us

a condition of bondage. "Deliver me; set me free;" and this freedom comes through a revival—a quickening according to God's word. Some of us are bound by habit; the habit of doing evil or the habit of doing nothing good. It is difficult to tell which is worse—the habit of doing what is wrong, or the habit of neglecting what is right. Oh for the quickening that will deliver us from these do-nothing bonds! Others are bound by the fear of men. When the apostles were filled with the Spirit, they spoke the word of God with boldness; they feared neither the face nor the sword of their enemies. Many are bound by self-interest. They are afraid to offend those out of whom they make profit. They will not be out-and-out Christians, lest some who read not the Bible and care nothing for religion will not be pleased. The social circle in which they move is not an atmosphere of religion. The opinions of their friends do not encourage active work for Christ. We need a quickening, that will give us strength, like Samson, to break the cords which these Philistines of the world have put upon us.

III. How to get such a Revival.

Pray for it. Every text is a prayer: "Quicken Thou me according to Thy word." It is a personal prayer. It is well to pray for the pastor, for the church, for all Christendom, for the world. It is better to begin by praying for one's self. "Quicken *me*." If you are quickened, somebody else will be; and if the fire begins in your soul, the flames will catch the combustible material about you. You need to strike the match that can burn up a city. The fact is, all quickening must be individual. The Lord does not quicken the crowd. The tongue of flame at Pentecost sat not upon the crowd, but "upon each of them." A revival that comes in answer to prayer is God-given, and the only kind worth having. A revival gotten up is soon put down. A revival produced by a series of mechanics, whether of song or invitation or eccentricity, will not last. It can be destroyed by an opposite course of mechanics. It is simply a battle of force with force, with which God has nothing to do. The revival which we call the Reformation was born in

prayer. Luther's habit was to pray three hours a day. The knees of Melanchthon were found after his death to have been made callous by kneeling. Pentecost was preceded by ten days of supplication and prayer. Peter and John were in the spirit of prayer on their way into the Temple, when the other great revival in which many were converted was commenced. After Christ had cast out the devil from the demoniac, he said: "Such as this cometh only by prayer." Oh for Elijahs who can break up the spiritual drought by praying rain out of the skies! Jonathan Edwards' sermon on the "Sinner in the Hands of an Angry God" he preached many times, but only on one occasion was it signally blessed. He read from a manuscript, holding it up awkwardly to the light; and yet, while he read, the people took hold of the pews, fearing that they were sliding into hell. What was the secret? A little company of his members had met the Saturday evening before, remained together without supper, continued in prayer all night, forgot their breakfast next morning, as they pleaded with God for His hand of power upon their pastor.

John Wesley carried an old man around with him to pray for him. The secret of his vast power was doubtless the intercession of this godly man. "Father" Chiniquy was converted on a Saturday evening, and he spent the whole night in prayer and praise. No wonder when he stood up before his large congregation the next day, and preached on Jesus Christ the gift of God, a thousand souls were converted. What we need now for quickening is not so much money and wisdom as the spirit of supplication. Pray for yourself until the new life is infused; and when that new life comes, it will lead you to pray for others. Like the servant-girl in a New England town who prayed all night for the salvation of her mistress. That mistress, unable to sleep, convicted of her sin, not knowing the cause, urged her husband to go out and get some preacher to pray for her; then, reflecting that the servant-girl was a Christian they went to her room, and before opening the door they heard these words: "O Lord, bless mistress. Have mercy on her, for she is good to me." Opening the door gently, husband and wife knelt down by the side of their

servant-girl, and asked her to pray for them. We need not riches, nor honor, nor position to have the ear of the King. The weakest may be made powerful by the quickening of the Spirit. If you cannot pray, then try David's petition: "Quicken Thou me, and I will call upon Thy name." Pray for the grace to pray; pray for the spirit of prayer; and the God of all mercy and grace will show forth His power.

VII.

AN UNFORTUNATE MARRIAGE.

"The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose." —GEN. 6 : 2.

CAIN'S method of treating Abel represents one phase of the world's treatment of the church. It was open opposition, radical, cruel, decisive. He simply killed him, and thought thus to end him and his cause. The tactics of the world, however, have changed: the descendants of Cain no longer oppose and persecute the church. "The daughters of men" accept proposals of marriage from the "sons of God," and, as a result, the deluge.

The pagan world tried to kill the church

for nearly three hundred years. Its efforts only multiplied her members and power. The blood of the martyrs has ever been the seed of the church. When, however, Constantine offered to join wealth, honor, and political power to the church, she accepted the offer, and what the second Adam refused the second Eve gladly received, and the result was a fallen church. We see in this Satan's usual tactics. He likes to appear as an angel of light. He would help us. He offers to help Eve to knowledge and power. He would help Christ in supplying Him with food, and in giving Him earthly glory.

In proportion as the church has resisted the wiles of this charmer, she has been strong; and in proportion as she has yielded and formed alliances with the world, she has been weak. Israel alone with God could never be conquered, but when she formed alliances with Egypt, or the Canaanites, her enemies found little difficulty in making quick work of her. Hezekiah was not overcome by the bold threats of the messengers of Sennacherib. Their insolent words drove him to God, who sent His angel to strike dead his enemies; but

when the messengers of Merodach-Baladan came with words of friendliness and flattery, he opened to them his treasures, and, letting them into the secret of his strength, was thus the occasion of Israel's downfall. We should fear the Greeks, though bearing gifts. It is now time to answer two questions suggested by the text:

I. What were the causes which led to this union of the church with the world?

II. What were the results of it?

I. What led to the Union?

The increase of population had something to do with it. "When men began to multiply." There are many advantages from the gathering together of large numbers of people. The highest type of civilization and religion is reached in great cities, but here the forces of evil are also strongest. Disease is contagious, while health is not. Wild weeds left to themselves flourish, while tender garden plants wither and die. A prominent preacher said some time ago that puritanism was forever

dead in New York City. He might have added that in many of the churches Christianity was as dead as puritanism, and I wonder what relation the death of puritanism has had to the death of Christianity. We have no fancy for the style of hat and coat which the Puritans wore. The follies of the "Blue Book" we do not admire, but in the Puritan character there was sturdy stuff. Theirs was no invertebrate theology, jelly-fish morality, or india-rubber conviction. They were such men as you would like for your daughter to marry; as you would trust in business; as make a country great. A Boston orator exclaims, "I am glad that the Puritans lived, and I am glad that they are dead." So am I, for I believe that most of them are in heaven, and very much better off than if they were in Boston to-day. Happy for Boston if the descendants of the Puritans were as good as their fathers. And these men of heroic conviction were not blue and melancholy ascetics. Their pleasure was not of the variety-theatre type. It was not made up of froth, but flowed from beneath the throne, deep as the river of God.

"They shook the depths of the desert gloom
With their hymns of lofty cheer;
Amid the storm they sang,
And the stars heard and the sea,
And the sounding aisles of the dim wood rang
With the anthem of the free."

The attractiveness of the world, however, was the force which brought about this union. The daughters of men were fair. Added to their beauty were wealth and musical culture. The poorer sons of the church could not withstand these charms. They were drawn, not by the godliness of their characters, but by the goodliness of their looks. The world to-day is very attractive. It knows how to hide its hideous deformity behind beauties of face and external accomplishments, and the daughters of men still delight to throw their charms over the sons of the church, and lead them to make fools of themselves. Nothing pleases a beautiful, worldly young woman better than to make conquest of a godly, spiritual young man, and lead him at her will into places and indulgences of which his conscience does not approve.

Note, however, that the church made the

advances. The sons of God wen. courting the daughters of men; and that is often the case to-day. Some churches court the world more than the world courts them. Such a church hopes to get something out of the world by becoming worldly.

"She welcomes the world to her festal halls
With attractions varied and new,
And thus easily done with frolic and fun,
She gives to the Lord His due.
Fair and festival, frolic untold,
Are held in the place of prayer,
And the maidens, bewitching as sirens of old,
With worldly graces rare,
Invent the very cunningest tricks,
Untrammelled by gospel or laws,
To beguile and amuse, and win from the world
Some help for the righteous cause."

The church thus loses her personality, blends into the world, becomes a part of it. Now do not misunderstand me. I believe in laughter. The smile is better than the frown, and I yield to none in the claim that true Christianity gives the highest type of pleasure. But we can never win the world simply by courting it and laughing with it. There is

a shrub in Arabia called the laughing plant; ground to powder, and administered, it produces fits of laughter. The person under its influence is unconscious of everything about him, as he roars in hysterical laughter. But Christianity is no laughing plant. It tells the truth about sin and its punishment, and reveals to men the deformity of their own characters; such faithfulness should bring tears rather than laughter. We may laugh when there is a time to laugh, but it is poor policy to seek to win the world by merely joining in its frolics.

These sons of God were evidently prayerless and wilful. "They took wives of all which they chose." They didn't consult God about it. They were led simply by their own taste. Before you stand under the orange-blossoms, it is well for you to get upon your knees and ask God for guidance. Be charmed as you will by the beautiful face, fine culture, and all external graces, but there may be a serpent in a basket of flowers. Back of all that beauty and outward grace is there a grace of character which will last after the face is withered and the eye grown dim? But above all it is

needful for the Christian, when tempted to form alliances with the world, to get upon his knees and ask God's opinion of it. Are you fond of dancing? Get on your knees and ask God whether or not by such alliances as that amusement forms you can promote His glory. If so, you may dance your feet off. I would, if I were convinced that I could thus win the world to Christ. Are you fond of the theatre? Get upon your knees and ask God whether an alliance with such an institution will help His cause. If you are convinced that it will, by all means attend, and support the theatre. Do you like card-playing? Upon your knees ask God whether by an alliance with that institution you can have more influence for Christ with a godless world. If so, spend your evenings in shuffling cards. Make light of them as we will, these are solemn questions; for, listen! "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of this world is enmity with God. Whosoever, therefore, would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God." Polygamy we despise. Spiritual polygamy God hates. It is unfaithfulness to Him, of the

blackest dye. Let us shun it, as we would the leprosy.

II. What were the Results of this Union upon the Church?

There was evidently a loss of power. The world had gained the church, but the church had not gained the world. The daughters of men played havoc with spirituality. One godless, worldly woman, with great beauty and refinement of manners, can do more harm in a church than five men. She makes the home, and, when the home is against the church, the pulpit has little power. Sad the day when the principles and spirit which govern the home cannot live in the atmosphere of the church. A Brahmin said to a missionary in India: "We are beginning to find you Christians out. You are not as good as your Book; if you were, the world would soon be converted." Worldly men despise the Christianity that apes their ways and is, therefore, no better than themselves.

In the town of Banbridge, County Down, Ireland, in 1859, a travelling circus spread its tent and was rewarded by the attendance of

only three persons. The astonished manager inquired the reason, and found that a revival of religion was in progress of such power that the people took no interest in his circus. That was one way of converting Banbridge. Another method would have been to send a committee of church people to meet the circus men and inform them that they would like to add a religious service to their performances. The church wanted to go to the circus, but could not do it conscientiously, unless there was something pious about it. The agreement is made, and, while the clowns stand by and the riders are ready, a prayer is offered, a hymn is sung, a short exhortation is given by the principal pastor of the town, in which he denounces puritanical notions and lauds the jollities of the circus ring. What is the result? A conglomeration of heterogeneous worldliness and religion, which disgusts men and is sickening to God—the sort of thing which made Him say to one of the churches in Asia that He would spew them out of His mouth, and which made the world so bad that He had to wash its filthy surface with a deluge and begin anew with one family that remained true to Him.

VIII.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF GIVING.

"It is more blessed to give than to receive."—ACTS 20 : 35.

SOME gems, as solitaires, are most beautiful; they are so brilliant that they need no other gems to set them off. This text is such a gem of truth. It appears to have been omitted by the four evangelists, and picked up by Paul as he came along after them; but there was really no omission. The other beatitudes lean upon each other: it takes them all to make a whole. This one is a sort of summary of all the rest: it is the life of Christ in a nut-shell. It is but another way of saying, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

Now in what consists the blessedness of giving?

I. Giving includes Receiving.

"Give, and it shall be given unto you; pressed down, running over." "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty." Scripture after scripture goes to prove that the man who gives receives, though the man who receives, sad to say, does not always give. Receiving is but a province in the larger kingdom of giving. Note, however, that it is giving—not trading, nor paying, nor bartering. If we give with a view to receiving from God, we give not at all. If we give expecting nothing in return, God will make an abundant return. If we give expecting Him to repay, the very nature of the act is changed. He does not promise to give money for money, bond for bond, gold for gold; but He does promise that to those who give He will make returns.

A little boy in London gave to the Lord's cause one fifth of the prize he won at school. Though never a millionaire, he was the most abundantly blessed of all great preachers.

That boy was Charles H. Spurgeon. God returned to him a thousandfold.

II. Giving Cleanses, while Receiving and Keeping Pollutes.

"Give of such things as ye have, and, behold, all things are clean unto you" (Luke 11 : 19). The foulest things in New York are not the sewers, but the money in the pockets of some men who have not given a cent of it to God. The fountain that throws up its sparkling water into the sunlight is made clean by the very process of giving. The Dead Sea, with its black asphaltum, is the foulest of places. No fish live in its waters; no fowl swim upon its bosom; and the secret of its foulness is that it takes the Jordan in at one side and gives off nothing. The Sea of Galilee would be as foul as the Dead Sea, if it gave not off the Jordan that it receives. The man that only takes blessing from God is a Dead Sea; the man that receives from God and gives back of what he receives is a Galilee full of life and beauty. I

have heard of a Christian woman who, while poor, gave liberally to several good causes, but, after she had inherited a fortune, she ceased to give anything. One of the deacons waited upon her and asked her the reason. She frankly replied that, while she was poor, she did not know the value of money, but, after she became rich, she saw that one dollar would make another, and it dried up the fountain of her benevolence. Receiving made her narrow and stingy.

On the diary of a good woman in New York, who received five thousand dollars from a friend, were written the words: "Quick, quick, before my heart grows hard." She had been in the habit of giving a certain portion of all her earnings to the Lord, and, when she found that she had five thousand dollars on hand, the temptation was strong not to give the same proportion, but to keep it for her own use. She felt the polluting process begin, and hastened to counteract it by promptly giving. I knew a man worth fifty thousand dollars whose wife had to give him ten cents every Sunday, to induce him to go to church with her. He explained it by say-

ing, "I have fallen into such a habit of making money that I can do nothing, unless I see some money in it." Now that man was very little—smaller than ten cents, smaller even than the infinitesimal part of a cent. Ostervalde, a banker of Paris, while on his dying bed, refused to order beef for his broth, because he could not think what disposition could be made of the beef after he had drunk the broth. Receiving had contracted the nature of these misers, until there was scarcely anything of the man left.

III. Giving develops all other Graces.

It is a grace. "As ye abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also." The growth of any grace will develop other graces, just as the growth of any sin will develop all other sins. Giving fosters and increases love. We love those for whom we make sacrifices. The mother loves most tenderly the child for whom she gives the most sleepless nights. I may not understand why God first loved sinners;

but, after I have seen Christ on the cross, learned something of how much God has sacrificed for sinners, I understand why He loves them now. If you would attach a man to you, do him a kindness; if you would bind him to you with hooks of steel, get him to do you a kindness. A pastor in Wilmington, N. C., threw a stray dog a bone. The dog returned the next day, and he fed him again. After a few days he began to feel a sort of attachment for the wandering animal, and the more he did for it, the more he liked it. Doing a kindness even to a dog will attach us to it. Giving makes us more cheerful, while receiving may make a man morose and melancholy. Some of the gloomiest, saddest, most forlorn men I ever saw are those who simply know how to hold the strings of their pocket-books, and keep all they have. A Hindoo Christian who was employed by a missionary was noted for his grumbling about hard times. One day when the missionary paid the grumbler his ten rupees, he handed back one of them as a gift to the mission. The next week the missionary noticed that his worker was more cheerful, that he did not grumble about

hard times; and asked him what had caused this sudden change to come over him. "Well," said he, "I never knew what it was to be grateful to God for what He gave me, until I began to give something, and that makes me happy." Mr. Hamlin, a missionary to Constantinople, declares that paupers can be made industrious if you will only compel them to give something of what they beg to others worse off than themselves.

The practical question is: How can we make giving most blessed? By simply giving as God has directed in His Word. Give regularly, give systematically, give weekly. "Let every one of you on the first day of the week lay by him in store." This is the only command we have in the New Testament for the observance of any duties on the Lord's Day. It is fatal to the development of the best Christian character, when a man makes up his mind to wait till he can do something great before he will give at all. Such a man may make a reputation for stinginess and meanness that will ruin his influence. Mr. Guyot, a rich Frenchman in Marseilles, by great energy amassed a large fortune. He

refused to give to any object while he was making his money, so that he was regarded as mean, and, when he appeared in public, he was hooted by the populace; but in Mr. Guyot's will was this sentence: "I have noticed the hardships of the poor in not being able to get fresh water except at great cost, and I have labored hard through my life to accumulate money, that I might put water within reach of all." Then he goes on to say that he wishes his fortune to be devoted to the building of an aqueduct for the benefit of the poor. Mr. Guyot's praises are now sung by the people of Marseilles, but it does not atone for a lifetime of bad reputation on account of his niggardliness.

IV. Giving fills Time and Eternity with Joyful Surprises.

I gave one dollar in the first collection ever taken for a Baptist church in the city of Rome, and, when I read of the converts under the labors of our missionaries there now, I feel that I have a part in it. It is bearing interest every month. Those who gave their

money to the support of the Telugu mission thought for twenty years that there was no return, but the interest came pouring in with ten thousand converts in one year. Dorcas is doubtless being surprised in heaven every day. She is still gathering the fruits of the sewing society that she organized for the poor. That widow who put in the two mites rejoices with Dorcas in the returns that are still coming in. It will take time and eternity to exhaust the influence of their self-sacrificing acts.

IX.

COMFORT FOR THE WEAK.

"And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

"On which account I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."—2 COR. 12 : 9, 10.

WHEN a Roman emperor returned from conquest and was given a triumphant entrance into the Eternal City, it was customary to put a slave in the chariot with him, whose duty it was to remind him now and then that he, too, was human. As he looked upon the trophies of victory and listened to the huzzahs of the people, he must not forget that he was made of common stuff. Such was something

like the experience of the apostle Paul. He won many a victory, and was worthy of many a triumphal procession. In the midst of it all he was in danger of being exalted above measure. So God put with him in the chariot of life what he calls a "thorn in the flesh," a messenger of Satan to buffet him, and thus remind him that he was weak and human.

The word translated "thorn" may be more accurately rendered "stake," which was the kind of instrument on which prisoners were impaled when thrown from a precipice or crucified. It does not mean a splinter under the finger-nail, but an experience like being impaled upon a stake—unutterable anguish of body or mind.

Just what this thorn in the flesh was, I am not certain. After having investigated it as thoroughly as possible, I feel a little like the old country preacher who made a sermon on the subject with seven divisions, each one of which was the opinion of a different commentator, and closed his sermon with a rousing exhortation in which he insisted that nobody knew what it meant. It is probable, however, that it was a physical weakness

which caused Paul intense pain—perhaps soreness of eyes, the result of the blinding on the way to Damascus. Whatever it was, he was very anxious to get rid of it, and prayed to the Lord three times that He would remove it. The text is God's answer, in which we have:

I. A Comforting Fact.
II. A Comforting Promise.
III. A Comforting Conclusion.
IV. A Comforting Privilege.

I. A Comforting Fact.

Every fact to the eye of faith may be comforting, because "all things work together for good to them that love God." But the most comforting fact of which I know is in the words: "My strength is made perfect in weakness." A mother's strength is made perfect in weakness. Should the house be on fire, she could carry out three or four children, whereas, in a quiet time, it would give her pain to lift one. The strength of the United States might be brought out by a war with Russia, but her strength is made more perfect by the

weakness of Russia's starving millions. It is better to show our strength by helping the weak than by shaking our fists at little governments like Chili.

A student in the Union Theological Seminary, New York, tells of a sick young man who was brought from the hospital to one of the rooms in the seminary, that he might be nursed by some friends among the students. No professor in that seminary did as much good for two or three months as this invalid young man. His weakness called out the strength of the students, who were glad to sit up with him all through the night and minister to him; and, as they saw his sweet, submissive, and joyful Christian character, they were developed in grace. We cannot establish a professorship of sympathy in our seminaries, but, if such a thing were possible, it would go further than anything else toward making perfect the strength of the rising ministry. Comforting beyond measure is the thought that God's strength is manifested in proportion to my weakness.

II. A Comforting Promise.

Paul desired a display of power which should put him beyond the need of grace. God restrained His power, that He might make His grace flow forth. We often pray God to use His power, when what we most need is His grace; and, when He refuses to display His power, we may always claim the promise: "My grace is sufficient for thee."

Only sufficient, not superfluous. Yesterday I sat by the side of a young lady whom the doctor had given up to die. She was almost ashamed to meet God, but with a smile declared that she was willing to go, if it was His will. "A year ago, however," she said, "I could not have said that." My reply was, "It was not needful a year ago that you should say it. God's grace is sufficient. He gave you grace then for what you needed; He will give you grace now in the more trying hour." May God heal her, if it be His will; but, whether she is healed or not, she has grace sufficient, and that is better than healing without the grace. It is better to be in need and have God sup-

ply the need, than to be without need and without His supply. Robert Hall preached better because he knew what physical suffering meant. Richard Baxter wrote better because of his bodily infirmity. Spurgeon did the best work of his life while an invalid. The sufficiency of His grace appears clear, when we think that it comes to us through Jesus Christ. "He was touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses." Christ knew what it was to be weary, weak, and sick. He put Himself in man's condition, that we might know how He could sympathize with us.

The Grand Duke Sergius, the Governor of Moscow, suspected that the bakers were cheating the poor starving people. He ordered the police to make an investigation, and they reported in favor of the bakers. Suspecting that something was wrong, the Grand Duke put on the garb of a peasant, went among them, lived as they lived for a while, and learned for himself the suffering of his poor people. How close it brought the Grand Duke to the starving peasantry, when they learned that, in order to ascertain their wants, he had become

as one of them! and how close it should bring us to Jesus when we reflect that, in order to make plain the sufficiency of His grace, He took upon Himself our very weakness, and put Himself in the place of need! For prosperity and adversity, for sickness and health, for riches and poverty, for failure and success, the promise is always good, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

III. A Comforting Conclusion.

All conclusions drawn by faith are comforting. Reason is a servant, not a master. It is the most abject slave in the world. It does the bidding of ignorance, of sin, of virtue, of vice, of knowledge, of faith, or of unbelief. It has little or no moral sense. It works for those who assert their mastery over it. I am sick. Unbelief says, "Therefore God does not treat me kindly; life is a failure." Faith says, "God has in this sickness a message of love for me. He may be laying me aside for repairs; He is making a need that He delights to supply." I have lost by death my dearest friend. Unbelief says, "Therefore God made

a mistake." Faith says, "Heaven is now more attractive: I have a treasure there. My friend has been saved from the evil to come. Out of this death may come more good than out of life." Calamity sweeps away my property. Unbelief says, "Therefore God has forsaken me." Faith says, "God is trying me in the furnace. He wants to get rid of the dross, and make the gold in me pure." Paul draws the conclusion of faith: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

The word "rest" means to abide, as a tent or a house, a protection upon me. The polar bear is in some respects stronger than man. He carries his house about with him. He does not need a covering: the cutting wind and freezing cold do not affect him. He can lie down on a snowbank, with the thermometer below zero, and sleep soundly. But I would rather be a man needing a house and clothing than the polar bear independent of surroundings. I glory in the weakness which calls for protection.

A man in Cuba was brought out to be shot, and, just as the soldiers were getting ready to

fire, an American standing by took the Stars and Stripes and covered the prisoner with them, saying, "Fire if you dare! To shoot this man is to fire upon the United States Government." His life was saved. The power of the United States rested upon him, and I think if I had been in his place I should have worn that flag on the streets and slept in it at night. So the power of Christ rests upon us. That prisoner could have declared himself independent of the United States, and met the soldiers in his own strength; but foolish would he have been to do so. He let his weakness bring forth the strength of this Government. What we need is thus to link our weakness with the power of Christ.

Two kinds of forces are not apt to work well together. Not many years ago the horse was the motive-power in this country. Steam soon displaced it, and now it seems that electricity may displace steam. It is difficult to harness the horse and steam together. How would it do to hitch six horses to a steam-engine on the way to Chicago? They would be an obstacle on the track. Yet much of our time is spent in trying to hitch our little strength to

the omnipotence of God. Instead of using what we have in supplying the engine with coal and water, submitting to the conditions that make speed and power, we want to put our strength in the front, and thus we become more of a hindrance than a help.

An electric car stopped in Boston some time ago, and one of the passengers asked, "What is the matter?" "Oh!" said the conductor, "nothing but dirt on the track." The dirt broke the current of power. Our strength is often but dirt on the track, hindering the work of God. What we need above all things is to realize that we are weak, and that God's strength waits to be made perfect in our weakness, for He prefers faith in Him to any sort of reliance upon ourselves.

Therefore we may gladly glory in infirmities. It is natural for some people, however, to look for things about which they may complain. They are like little Tommy, who was crying as if his heart would break, when he suddenly looked up to his mother through his tears, saying, "Mamma, what was I crying about?" "I think, Tommy," she replied, "it was because I would not let you have the bronze

statue on the mantel-piece." "No, that was not it," continued Tommy, still crying: "it was because you would not let me go out in the cold; but I am going to cry some more about that statue," and he promptly raised his boo-hoo. Tommy was looking for something to cry about. He was not anxious to be happy, but miserable. He wanted to draw a conclusion of pain rather than joy, and, if we have that desire, of course we may be gratified.

I am glad that I have not microscopic eyes. My eyes are just good enough to see the light, without seeing the motes in it; the flowers, without beholding the worms; the food and water, without seeing the millions of animalculæ that squirm in them. May we have eyes of faith to see the good, and to draw from all the facts of life, and the promises of the Word, conclusions that comfort our souls!

IV. A Comforting Privilege.

"On which account I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake." There

was a time when Paul did not take pleasure in infirmities. He tells us that he was anxious to get rid of the infirmity that clouded his life. But when he saw that God supplied the grace, he began to love the supply better than freedom from infirmity. He saw that it was better to have darkness with stars brought out by it, than all sunshine and no stars; that the cold winds of winter are as necessary for the world's development as the cheerful warmth of spring and summer; that the mantle of snow is as good for earth as its mantle of grass and flowers. But for the snow mantle, the mantle of flowers might not be. When a man learns that God's strength is perfected through his infirmity, necessities, persecutions, and distresses, he will by and by begin to welcome them as an angel sent from heaven to minister to him.

Necessity makes most men. If it is necessary that you should go from the fifty-thousand-dollar house on the splendid street to the five-thousand-dollar one on the humble street, rejoice in the necessity. God has in that necessity some purpose of love, deeper and better than if it had never existed.

A French shoemaker was taken prisoner by a Turkish Sultan, and the Sultan, desiring his new palace frescoed, ordered the shoemaker into his presence, and commanded him to do the work, because, as he said, all Frenchmen were artists. The shoemaker, however, was artist only with his awl and wax-end, in fitting leather to feet, and so remonstrated with the Sultan and begged to be excused. But the Sultan said: "Frenchmen are liars as well as artists, and, unless you do the work, I will cut your head off." Thus ended the interview. The shoemaker, seeing the necessity of painting or dying, decided to learn to paint, and with what help he could gather, toiling night and day, he soon completed the work to the satisfaction of the Sultan, who praised him for his skill and gave him his liberty. This necessity turned the shoemaker into an artist, and but for such a necessity he would have died with his awl in hand. The necessities of life make merchants, physicians, statesmen, preachers, mechanics; indeed, are the moulding forces, transmuting men and women into their better selves.

The things we do not want are often the things we need. What we shrink from, as a child from medicine, may be for our healing.

Here's a story for the children, illustrating this fact. A little girl was sent to a neighbor's house in a mountain district, to bring home two geese which had been purchased. She had to drive them through a dark wood in the evening twilight. She did not fear the shadows, but beyond the forest was a house with a fierce dog in the yard. This dog she feared, and as she approached the house her little heart was throbbing in her throat. Suddenly she heard a rattling in the leaves, and a wild-cat sprang out upon one of the geese. Not realizing her danger, she rushed to the help of her charge, and the wild-cat leaving the goose, attacked her, and was tearing her clothes and flesh, when out from the gate the fierce dog bounded, rushed upon the scene, and seizing the wild-cat with his sharp teeth soon made an end of him. The dog the little girl dreaded was just what she needed. She thought little of the dangers of the woods; the danger that she feared was really her safety. And as we pass through life, amid

the shadows that gather about us, we dread the dogs of adversity, of great distress, more than we do the little wild-cats of selfishness and sin that waylay us. But our need is sometimes that these very dogs with sharp teeth should have access to us, and they will destroy the things that would destroy us. God knows it, and He turns them loose upon us.

Believe me, Christian, the weights of life may be its wings; the sorrows, its joys; the adversity, its true prosperity; the darkness, its most radiant light. The burdens upon us may be the lever that lifts us up. Take courage, then, under any burden.

"The camel at the close of day
Kneels down upon the sandy plain
To have his burden lifted off,
And rest again.

"My soul, thou too shouldst to thy knees
When twilight draweth to a close,
And let thy Master lift the load,
And grant repose.

"The camel kneels at break of day
To have his guide replace his load,
Then rises up anew to take
The desert road.

"So thou shouldst kneel at morning's dawn,
That God may give thee daily care,
Assured that He no load too great
Will make thee bear."

X.

STIRRING THE NEST.

"As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him."—DEUT. 32 : 11, 12.

TO understand this text, we must study the context. The preceding verse gives us a description of the wilderness-wandering state.

It is the state of Jacob before he becomes Israel—Jacob the intriguer, rather than Israel, the prince of God. But Jacob is as much in God's care as Israel, and belongs to Him as thoroughly. Jacob is protected: God "compasses him about" and keeps him as the "apple of His eye."

In the verse following our text we have a description of the Canaan state. There is plenty and stability, with conflict, to be sure; but the land is marked off, the boundaries are

defined, and the people are fixed in their purpose.

God's purpose is to lead us out of the unstable, wandering experience to one of more fixedness and definiteness of hope and aim; and the method by which He leads us is compared to the eagle stirring her nest, fluttering over her young, spreading abroad her wings, taking them and carrying them on her wings.

I. God leads us into Higher Experiences by making us Uncomfortable.

"As an eagle stirreth up her nest." Men are not apt to seek wealth until they become dissatisfied with poverty. We will not seek knowledge until we are dissatisfied with ignorance; and we are not apt to seek larger attainments in religion unless we are dissatisfied with our present condition. God takes away from us gold, that He may lead us to seek grace; He takes away our bonds, that He may supply us with His bounty; He takes our lands, that He may give us larger liberty. Many a prosperous business man has been

brought to God by having his financial nest stirred; by being made to realize that the comforts which money can bring will not sustain one when money departs, and that there is in his soul a deeper depth than any that money can fill.

He may stir our social nest. Surrounded by pleasant companions, we are not so anxious for the companionship of God. We stay at home for the social party on prayer-meeting evening — we have such delightful, congenial company that the absence of God is scarcely missed. In love to us, God may compel us to move out of these surroundings, or, by a change of fortune, let the surroundings move off from us; and when we begin to feel lonely we will seek the best of company in communion with Him.

On a tablet in a church of Algiers is the name of "Devereux Spratt, 1641." The traveller naturally inquires what that means, and he is told that Devereux Spratt, an Englishman, was captured with one hundred and twenty others in 1641 by the Algerian pirates. He was put to work with his fellow-slaves on the fortifications around Algiers. Cut off from

congenial company, he looked to God for sympathy and strength, and God's grace proved, as always, sufficient.

Finding his fellow-captives full of despair, he began to cheer them with words of faith and hope; and soon he had gathered about him, through his faithful testimony, a little band of praying and worshipping Christians. Through the influence of his brother in England, after several years, Devereux Spratt was ransomed, and the order for his release was brought to the fortifications.

His fellow-captives rejoiced with tears at his good fortune, but expressed regret that their leader was to leave them. Devereux Spratt, however, refused to accept the ransom, and remained until he died, a slave among slaves, that he might continue to comfort those whom God had brought to Christ through him. What self-sacrifice! What heroism! And yet such a character was not made in the drawing-rooms of London.

Before his capture Devereux Spratt was an indifferent Christian. It took the stirring of his social nest, the removing of his pleasant surroundings, the driving him to the heart of

God, to make out of him the hero that he was.

An English rector tells of two women who were daughters of a nobleman. One of them married a very wealthy man, and gave herself up to the pleasures of society. She had all that money and position could give. The other married a poor man, and through his loss of health was driven to work for his support. The rector, who knew the sisters in their childhood, paid them a friendly visit. He found the woman of wealth and fashion sad, melancholy, irritable, complaining, and unhappy, tired of life. He found the poor sister at her wash-tub, cheerful, hopeful, trustful, grateful, and joyful. She spoke with a smile of the goodness of God in giving her health, that she might support her husband and two children.

Why the difference in the character of these two women? 'Tis plain enough that the discomforts of the one had made her comfortable, while the comforts of the other had made her uncomfortable.

II. That He may lead us on to this Higher Experience, God reveals to us His Tenderness and Power in the Midst of these Discomforts.

The eagle not only stirs up her nest, giving the eaglets discomfort; but she flutters over them and "spreadeth abroad her wings." Here is the manifestation of maternal tenderness and strength. In the very act of stirring up the nest for their discomfort, she flutters over them for their comfort, and spreads abroad her wings, to show them that she has strength to bear them up.

Happy is that man who amid the discomforts of life, whether they be financial, social, domestic, or physical, gets clearer views of God's tender love and great strength, so that he may be led to cast himself entirely upon Him for support.

Mrs. Varcroe met on a street in Melbourne three ragged boys. "Where do you live, boys?" she asked. "Nowhere," replied the roughest-looking one. "Where do you sleep at night?" "Anywhere," was the reply.

"Would you like to be my boys?" she continued. "The house of refuge," whispered one to the other, as he got a little further from her. "No, boys," she said kindly, "I don't want to put you in the house of refuge, but I thought maybe you would like to let me be a mother to you. When you get in that notion, come around to my house." And she gave her address. The next day about noon two boys with very ragged, dirty clothes and very clean faces rang the door-bell, and came in to say that they had decided to be her boys. Thus began the Australian Child Mission, which has done such a mighty work for God. Those ragged urchins in their discomforts were impressed with the tenderness and the ability of Mrs. Varcroe to help them, and, prompted by their very discomforts and the revelation of this tenderness, they cast themselves upon her strength.

And so every one, however weak, who will cast himself upon the strength of God, will be borne up amid uncomfortable surroundings into a higher comfort of soul experience.

God beareth us on His wings. We read in another scripture: "We shall mount up on

wings as eagles." But when we try to fly on wings of hope and love, we find that we have the bodies of eagles with the wings of sparrows. We are like penguins on the rock, heavy in flesh and no wings to speak of. But link that scripture with our text, and then we can fly sure enough, for we mount up on the wings of God.

XI.

PERENNIAL EASTER.

"And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring His disciples word."—MATTHEW 28 : 8.

TO observe Easter or not to observe it? that is the question with many earnest Christians. According to the New Testament, it is a matter of personal liberty. If you command me to observe it, I will not; for you have no authority to command it. You are then like the Galatians of whom Paul wrote: "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed labor upon you in vain." If you say, "Thou shalt not observe it," then I will do it; for you have no right to forbid it. If you forbid it, you have violated the principle laid down by Paul when he said: "One man esteemeth one day

above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day regardeth it unto the Lord, and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it." I enjoy the observance of Christmas. It was the brightest day in the calendar during my youth; but, if you command me to observe it, I will not. The fact that our ritualistic brethren have little else than flowers and music on Easter, has caused many to swing back to the other extreme, and declare that no notice should be taken of the day. One has as much right to his opinion as the other, only let not either put himself up as authority.

I would urge ritualistic Christians to observe Lent all the year. It is really a happy time with them. They are relieved from the burdens of society life. Temperate living is good for all days. The projection of Lent and Easter into every day would make a rounded Christian life; self-denial married to joy. And in the ordinances of the church we see that Jesus intended to project these principles into all the future. The Lord's Supper gives us

the idea of self-sacrifice for others; baptism gives us the joyful resurrection idea. Put these two together, and make them a part of your every-day life.

It is my purpose to analyze the joy of the first Easter, and see if we cannot have it every day. I like the word "seven," it is so Biblical, and I was gratified to find seven elements in this joy, a sort of rainbow of promise, spanning the Christian life.

I. We have the Joy of Disappointed Unbelief.

The women come with spices and oil to anoint, perhaps to embalm, the Lord. Instead of a corpse they find a king. Expecting death they find life. Embalming gives place to joyful worship. They are looking for difficulty in rolling the stone away: when they arrive the difficulty is overcome. The stone is away, and an angel upon it. They had a certain kind of faith in Christ. They believed that He was true: they loved Him; but it was unbelief as to His resurrection which led them

to come with spices and oil, and to fear that they would not be able to get into the sepulchre. The joy of this disappointed unbelief must have been intense, and it illustrates God's way of doing. He delights in surprising us; He gives more than we can ask or think.

The Missionary Union once prepared spices and oil for the embalming of the work in Telugu. Now that is the most prosperous mission in the world. Where their unbelief prophesied death there has been abundant life, and the joy of their disappointed unbelief has filled all Christendom.

A member of this church asked prayer the other day for a friend. Within two weeks that friend was converted, greatly to the surprise of the praying member, and in a way that he little dreamed of. He is to-day revelling in the joy of disappointed unbelief. God answered the prayer more quickly and more abundantly than he had anticipated. God delights to fill our lives with glad surprises of grace and power.

II. We have the Joy of Faith Confirmed.

That open sepulchre was the confirmation of every claim which Jesus Christ had made. He claimed that He and the Father are one. "Before Abraham was, I am," and His resurrection proves it. It is the stamp of Heaven upon His divinity. And as the disciples walk about in the open sepulchre, they see a sign which proves that grave-robbers have not been there. The linen cloth which bound His head is wrapped up carefully and laid aside. He rose from the dead without excitement or confusion. Every doctrine He taught, every miracle He performed, every hope He inspired, is confirmed. I know that Jesus rose from the dead better than I know that Hannibal crossed the Alps, that Cæsar was assassinated, or that Napoleon invaded Italy. The evidence in favor of it is simply overwhelming; and this irresistible proof is a confirmation of all that Jesus Christ claims. Not only on the Lord's Day, which is the weekly commemoration of His resurrection, but on every day in the week we may have this confirmation. Nothing

strengthens faith like meditation upon the resurrection of Christ. It was the theme of the apostles, and it has been the song of poets. It is the rock foundation of the Christian's hope.

III. We have the Joy of Light from Heaven.

Not the radiance of the angel's face, though that was glorious; not the halo about the head of the risen Lord; not the light of sun or of star beaming into the open door of the sepulchre, but the purer light of God's promise: "Fear not!" And as I trace through the Bible God's "fear nots" I find in them light for every experience of life. "Thy word is light." The word spoken by the angel was steadfast: it gave the disciples comfort; but the words spoken by Christ Himself are even sweeter to us than angelic messages. The messenger of the King comes with authority, but the voice of the King Himself we prefer to hear. Every day we may listen to Christ. Every morning may be an Easter morning, made bright by some promise from His Word.

IV. We have the Joy of Beholding Victory.

There was physical victory. Look at the body of Christ as it is taken from the cross—clotted with blood; eyes glazed in death; hands limp at the side, needing the strength of loving friends to bear it to the sepulchre. Now see him as he walks from the tomb in the full vigor of physical manhood; the marks still upon his body, but every physical power and function restored. I see in this for the Christian the promise and potency of complete victory over all the forces that make for death.

There was political victory. That seal, part of it attached to the rock of the mountain, and a part attached to the stone, none but an angel dare touch. It represented the greatest political power on earth. The Roman eagle at that time swayed the world. But the seal is broken, and Roman soldiers are flying before the Power that broke it. There is coming a time when the "kingdoms of this world shall be the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ,"

and it will be through the risen and reigning Lord that this shall be accomplished. And every day let us be cheered with the hope of complete national victory for our Lord Jesus Christ.

There was also moral victory. The forces of evil had for a time prevailed, and the sun of righteousness seemed for a while to have gone down in gloom. Demons of darkness may now dance for joy. The King has been captured. Yes, but within the very walls of death He has demolished every fortress. Every day we may have a joy of anticipated physical, national, and moral victory. Truly that makes life a perennial Easter.

V. We have the Joy of telling our Joy to Others.

"They did run to bring His disciples word." We pity the man who has a Christ that only lived, acted, and died. He may admire Him as a hero, honor Him as a martyr, canonize Him as a saint; but he can never have great joy in telling others about Him. It is only those who believe Christ divine, and, therefore, the Saviour from all sin, and with all power

in heaven and earth, who can experience ecstasy of heart in proclaiming Him unto others. Have you ever had such Easter joy? If not, determine to have it to-day before the sun goes down. The joy of telling others about the risen Lord is a treasure which every Christian may possess; and just in proportion as we turn every day into that sort of Easter, we are truly happy and useful Christians.

VI. We may have the Joy of the Conscious or the Unconscious Presence of the Risen Lord.

At first Mary did not recognize Him. She thought it was the gardener—just a common man. When she heard Him speak, His familiar voice brought recognition, and she exclaimed, "Rabboni!" as she fell before Him to worship. Often we recognize the Lord as present with us through the tones of His promise. But there is another scene a little more precious to me than even this. Two men are on their way home from the city, where they have buried their hopes. They saw Him die, and looked upon the stone at the door of the sepulchre with the Roman seal upon it. They

expected that "it had been He who should have redeemed Israel." But He disappointed their expectation, because He had not acted just as they thought He would. They little dreamed that the purpose of redemption would lead Him to be crucified. Strange rumors are in the air about what women saw and angels said; but they get little comfort from that. Sad and depressed, they are on their way home, when a stranger falls in with them, and begins to explain to them the Scriptures, as written by Moses concerning the Messiah. Their hearts burn with a peculiar fervor. They are uplifted in spirit. To have the risen Christ walk with us when we are not conscious of His presence, but at the same time to reveal to us His preciousness, and appear in such a way as to make our hearts burn with love and gratitude, is a joy to be coveted.

This gives us a still larger Christ. "Without Him was not anything made that was made." He is not only Redeemer but Creator. Nature is unfallen. The birds sing, the streams murmur, the stars shine, the winds whisper the glory of God. All natural principles are obedient to His laws; only man is sinful and re-

bellious. In order, then, to be a true child of nature, you must become a child of grace. I love to read in the open Bible and in the open book of nature of the same almighty, loving God and His Son Jesus Christ. Every flower is His smile of beauty, every star His benediction, every landscape, with its mountains and valleys, a sign of His loving favor. The risen Christ is one "in whom we live, and move, and have our being," and He rules by His laws in the realm of the natural and spiritual world.

"The works of God are fair for naught
Unless we, in the seeing,
See hidden in the thing the thought
That animates its being.

"The outward form is not the whole,
But clearly has been moulded
To image forth the inward soul
Which dimly is unfolded.

"The shadow pictured in the lake
By every tree that trembles
Is cast for more than just the sake
Of that which it resembles.

"The dew falls lightly not alone
Because the meadows need it;
It has an errand of its own
To human souls that heed it.

"The stars are lighted in the skies
Not merely for their shining;
But, like the light of loving eyes,
Have meaning worth divining.

"Whoever, at the coarsest sound,
Still listens for the finest,
Shall hear the noisy world go round
To music the divinest.

"Whoever yearns to see aright,
Because his heart is tender,
Will catch a glimpse of heavenly light
In every earthly splendor.

"So since the universe began,
And will be till it's ended:
May soul of nature, soul of man,
And soul of God be blended."

Such blending of man's soul with the soul of unfallen nature and of God is brought about by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and we enjoy it every day.

VII. We have the Joy of Anticipation.

Jesus said to the women, "Go tell My disciples that they shall see Me in Galilee." Just when, just where, we do not know. It was simply a promise that they should soon meet

Him. And so the ascended Christ has said to us, "Just as ye have seen Me go up into heaven, so shall ye see Me come again in like manner." The whole earth is a Galilee waiting the appearing of the Lord. Just when, just where, we do not know, but that He will come in glory is the Christian's most certain hope. The joy of meeting Him is enhanced by the joy of meeting others who are with Him: "For them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."

The day after James Russell Lowell's wife died, sitting in his desolate home, he wrote these words:

> "There is a narrow ridge in the graveyard,
> 'Twould scarce stay a child in his race,
> But to me and my thought it is wider
> Than the star-sown vague of space."

The promise of the coming of the Lord has made narrow this "star-sown vague of space," and makes it but a thin veil between us and the objects of our love. It brings us, perhaps, within a few hours of meeting our risen Lord and glorified friends. Then, ah! then, an everlasting Easter!

XII.

CHARIOTS AND MANTLES.

"My father, my father, thou chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!"—2 KINGS 2 : 12.

THE translation I give of this text is approved by many eminent authorities; and whether it be strictly correct or not, the idea is certainly implied that Elijah himself was the chariot addressed by Elisha. Elisha was called of God and ordained by Elijah. His master informs him that he is going to leave the earth. A proof of the future life is needed. Elijah must not die a natural death, but must be carried up miraculously. He goes to see the schools of the prophets which he had established at Gilgal, Bethel, and Jericho. Elisha keeps with him, determined that his master shall not leave him for a moment. They cross the Jordan in view of the students of the college at Jericho. The waters are miraculously di-

vided, and the two prophets go on toward the desert together.

There is a scene in heaven. A large company of angels are summoned to go and bring the faithful prophet to his final home. These angels are called in Scripture chariots of God. The word cherub means chariot. As Elijah and Elisha journeyed, the angelic host appears, and, sweeping down before them, Elijah is carried up as in a chariot of fire. Can we imagine the glory of their journey through the skies as, passing planet and star, onward and upward they go until they come in sight of the golden gates which are thrown wide open, and all heaven shouts at the entrance of the faithful prophet?

The meaning of the text is that Elijah was the strength and glory of Israel. Chariots and horsemen of an army were considered its special strength. From this we learn three things:

I. God shows His Power and Glory through the Individual.

Organizations, societies, and institutions are of value; but the individual is the most impor-

tant factor in the advancement of God's kingdom. Christ did not become an institution, but a man—"The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." Elijah founded institutions of learning, but all combined were not equal to himself. The tongues of flame at Pentecost sat upon each of the disciples, not upon the company as a whole. God bears a personal relation to us, and through our personality He purposes to reach mankind. Of course an organization of many personalities may be stronger than any one personality; but let us realize that, in God's economy, He wants, first of all, the individual prepared, equipped for His service.

And the power of each person in God's kingdom is in proportion to his fatherhood. "My father, my father, thou strength of Israel, and glory thereof!" Elijah was the spiritual father of Elisha. He led him to leave his oxen and fields, and devote himself wholly to God; and the individuals who win most souls to Christ, who have thus the largest spiritual fatherhood, are the real chariots and horsemen of Israel. "They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever."

Mental acquisition, financial strength, social position will not make us such fathers of Israel; only the enduement of power from on high can form such chariots and horsemen. An individual full of the Holy Ghost is more powerful than a hundred organizations depending upon numbers and strength. Elijah stood alone at one time with God only on his side, and Elijah and God were stronger than all the forces of evil against them. As man, woman, child, let us link ourselves with God, and let Him pour His power through our personality; and, that He may do this, let us seek the best character possible.

II. God raises up Men of Power to take the Places of those He calls away.

As the chariot went up, Elijah's mantle fell down. This rough garment of skin was the symbol of authority and power. It was like the rod of Moses — nothing in itself, but chosen of God as a sort of symbol of His own omnipotence. This divine power Elisha needed: (1) *To remove obstacles.* The Jordan was in the way and must be divided. Its

swift, deep current could not be waded nor bridged. So we have in the path of our work Jordans of difficulty, and we need the mantle of power to smite them asunder. (2) *To remedy evils.* The poisoned water must be made sweet, and salt in itself will not sweeten it. The power of God, symbolized by the rough mantle, gave purity to the waters of Samaria. There is death in the pot, and the antidote of poison must be supplied. Men are covered with leprosy: the divine healing is needed. The fact is, this world is full of evils which need to be remedied, and only the divine power can cure them perfectly.

III. We need it to make a Little go a Great Way.

Elisha, invited to the home of the widow, must use miraculous power, that the cruse of oil and the meal in the barrel might not fail. Jesus could make a few loaves and fishes feed the five thousand; and only Jesus can do this. When we look to the work to be done and the means at hand with which to do it, it is as five fishes before five thousand men; it is as

the little oil and meal with months of necessity before us; but this divine power can multiply the fishes; can increase the oil and meal. We do not give as much to the glory of Christ as we should. His treasury may be emptied from stinginess, and those who do give all they can, who put at God's disposal the little that they have, need the God of Elisha to make that little go a long way. Oh, the millions of heathen to be reached, with a few Christians and little money to-day at God's disposal for it!

IV. We need this Divine Power to raise the Dead.

Men as dead spiritually, as was Lazarus physically, are at our doors. We cannot argue them into life; our teaching is powerless. Only the voice of God can bring them forth; and it is only through our consecration, through our wearing the mantle which sets us apart, that God speaks to the dead.

Now the question is, *How can we get this mantle of power?* 1. By intensely desiring it. Elisha would not be put off. Elijah told him

to leave, that he might test his faith; but his mind was made up to keep his eye on the master, for he had the promise if he saw him going up he would have a double portion of his spirit. We are told that the soldiers in Xerxes' army must hear the crack of whips behind their backs to make them march to battle. Such a spirit will never be endued with power. Only those who seek this enduement above everything else will receive it in fulness.

2. By patient waiting upon God. The apostles chose, in the place of Judas, one who had companied with them all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them, beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was received up from them. Elisha kept close to the prophet before his translation, and it was upon those who kept close to Christ before His translation that the Spirit of God came; and it is those who today walk with God—keep close to His side—that will receive the mantle of power. The men who learn the most of the earth-life of Christ, who grow in grace and in knowledge of Him, are most apt to be used by the Holy Spirit.

3. By appropriation. The mantle which dropped from Elijah did not fall upon the shoulders of Elisha: he had to pick it up; and God does not endue us with power in spite of ourselves. The Holy Spirit descended after the ascension of Christ. That is the mantle that Jesus, so to speak, dropped from Himself as He went into the skies; and we must by faith appropriate the Spirit. We must honor Him and expect Him to bless us. We are *saved* by faith in Christ; we are made *powerful* by faith in the Spirit. No man truly wears the mantle of God who looks upon the Spirit as neuter—as a mere influence. We must believe that He is with us—the very God—ready to work through our faith.

4. By using at once the faith and consecration we have. Elisha, as soon as he picked up the mantle, started back at once toward Jericho; and on reaching the Jordan he smote the waters, crying out: "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" and at the touch of the mantle the waters divided again. He did not think of folding up this sacred garment, and laying it aside as a memento of him who was gone: he looked upon it as for use; and so

we should regard the presence of the Holy Spirit, who is not here on a holiday. His business is to work mightily through us. He is anxious that we should trust Him and use the power that He is willing to give. We are the Elishas who represent the ascended Elijah. As Christ was in the power of the Spirit,—led by Him; working through Him; raised from the dead by Him,—so we are to have the same power. "And greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to My Father." Let us believe that the reign of the Spirit is the reign of power, and make our expectations great and our plans large.

V. After Men like Elijah have finished their Work, God takes them to Heaven in an Appropriate Manner.

Elijah means a chariot, and he was taken up in a chariot of fire. He was himself a flame of fire, consuming evil, purifying the good. The trend of his whole life was like the chariots and horsemen of an army—the glory of Israel; and it was appropriate that he should pass out of this world into heaven after

the manner in which he lived; and whether the eyes of men see it or not, such is the departure of all who are true to God. We are saved by grace, but in a sense we make our own chariots in which we ride to heaven.

Paul said: "I have fought the good fight; finished my course; kept the faith;" and when we think of his dying, there gather about him the angels of light from his past life—glorious chariots of light, indeed, which accompany him into heaven. The soul of John Huss went up literally in a chariot of fire; and yet, as we think of his martyrdom in the meadow outside the walls of Constance, the glories of his faithful life gather about the scene, and, like the sunset at the close of day, the very clouds which hover about his death are made beautiful. When we think of William Carey's death, there is suggested the missionary's glory—the angels of mercy and the converted heathen attending. Shaftesbury and John Howard go up in a chariot of philanthropy. Jerry McAuley's departure is in a chariot of glory made by a life of devotion to the lost of New York. I notice that this chariot came for Elijah while he was at work. Jericho was a wicked place, and at this centre

of wickedness he had established a theological seminary. It was here he made his last address; it was here he did his last faithful service; and near this wicked Jericho comes the chariot of God to take him. May we all wear the mantle of power, that we may depart in the chariot of glory!

XIII.

THE UNFAILING BARREL AND CRUSE.

"The barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah."—1 KINGS 17 : 16.

GOD'S METHOD OFTEN CHANGES, WHILE HIS PURPOSE REMAINS THE SAME.

HIS purpose was to preserve the prophet. For a while the brook and the ravens served his purpose. But the brook dried up, and instead of ordering the ravens to bring water also, he sends the prophet to a poor widow of Zarephath. Thus God's plan of keeping His people is constantly changing, while His loving purpose remains the same. Joseph was preserved equally well in the house of Potiphar, in the jail, and as ruler of Egypt. God's pur-

pose was to raise up a man who would deliver Israel from their task-masters. He kept him at first in the ark of bulrushes, then in the loving arms of his mother, then in the court and schools of Egypt, and then in the back side of the desert. Daniel fared equally well as a boy in the palace of the king, as an officer over the provinces of Persia, and as a servant of God among the lions. If we are children of God, His mind is made up to take us to heaven, and to give us just the treatment that will best fit us for the place. If He gives us wealth, it is because He knows that wealth is the best for us; if He gives us poverty, it is because He knows that we will be best preserved by struggle. Trust His wisdom and goodness to do the right thing.

When all things seem to be against us, remember that God is for us, and He never ceases to be master of the situation. The burgomaster of Hamburg bade Mr. Onken cease holding religious services, and, holding up his hand before him, angrily asked, "Do you see that little finger? As long as I can move that little finger, I will put down you Baptists." "Yes," replied Onken, "I see your little finger, and I

also see a great arm which you cannot see. As long as the great arm of God is lifted in our behalf, your little finger will have no terror for us." It is not our part to be looking at the little fingers against us, but at the great arm that is for us. Those who see the great arm need not fear ten thousand little fingers. Whatever relation these fingers may bear to us, we may be calm in the assurance that the purpose of God is His glory in our preservation, and, though His plans may change, His purpose remains the same.

We learn also from this unfailing barrel and cruse that

GOD HAS A WAY OF SELECTING WHOM HE PLEASES AS AGENTS TO CARRY OUT HIS WILL.

Jesus tells us that there were many widows in Sarepta who were passed by, while this one was selected. She was not the one we should have chosen. We should have looked for a house where there was a little more meal and oil and wood. A poor woman gathering sticks outside the city gates was the last person to be thought a fit host for the prophet. But God thought otherwise. And so

He thinks to-day in the selection of His workers. Who would have thought of R. W. McAll as the proper person to undertake the evangelization of Paris—an Englishman over fifty years of age, who could not speak a word of French? And yet he was the man of God's choice. Jerry McAuley, the river pirate, would hardly have been chosen by us as the man above all others to bring the bread of life to the outcasts of New York. If we had met Saul on his way to Damascus, it would not have occurred to us that this cruel persecutor was the man chosen of God to take the lead in building up the cause he was trying to destroy. God is constantly surprising the world by selecting agents we in our wisdom have rejected. Bunyan, the tinker, was no fit man to write such a book as "The Pilgrim's Progress." John Wesley and George Whitefield, the bisnops thought, were not the men to preach to the people. Mr. Booth was doing no good with his wild methods of work among the poor in the Whitechapel district of London, and the bishop must needs bid him change his plans or leave the church. Mr. Moody was not even a fit man to speak and pray in a prayer-meet-

ing, and his pastor kindly told him so. But God had a mission for him and for all these men. Whom the Lord has chosen, let us not reject. God ordains many a man for mighty work whom any council for ordination would be ashamed to lay hands upon. He is constantly passing by tall Eliab, that He may select little David. It may be because little David is willing to be used and give Him the glory. Whatever may be said about the men as to whose fitness for great work God and the world have different opinions, they were all willing to be used. The widow of Sarepta, though she felt unable, was willing to entertain the prophet; and our usefulness depends far more upon our willingness than upon our ability. If you are downright willing to be used of God, He can make you capable and He will. "My people shall be a willing people." Willingness is capacity, for what else we need God is pledged to supply.

Let us learn again from this unfailing barrel and cruse that

IN HELPING OTHERS WE HELP OURSELVES.

If the widow had kept her little meal and oil

for her own use, she and her son had starved. Dividing multiplied it. Such is God's arithmetic. To keep is to lose. To hold and hoard is to diminish. To scatter is to increase. Men who put their bodies wholly into the service of God with implicit trust in Him do not break down from overwork. It is the worry, fretting, and chafing resulting from a failure thus to commit to God which shatters nerves and calls for protracted vacations. After one has been in the pastorate for many years, there is danger of his barrel of sermons failing, and, if it does, it is because his thinking and time have not been wholly given to God. The lad with the few loaves and fishes had the pleasure of seeing them multiplied into enough to feed the five thousand. The secret of such success was that he committed his little supply to Jesus, and He always sees to it that what is given wholly to Him shall not fail, but multiply. Churches and enterprises fail for the lack of consecration. If we use for God every barrel and cruse of money, time, talent, and opportunity we have, there will be plenty and to spare.

XIV.

TREASURES IN HEAVEN.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."—MATTHEW 6: 19, 20.

THERE are four ways by which we may lay up treasures in heaven.

I. BY GIVING OF OUR POSSESSIONS TO THE NEEDY.

"If thou wilt be perfect," said Jesus to the rich young man, "go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and THOU SHALT HAVE TREASURE IN HEAVEN." If you wish to express some of your money from earth to heaven, give it to those who need. Dispense

with your luxuries, that you may supply their necessities.

"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." If we have abundance, it is God's rich gift. He means for us to enjoy it. But how may I enjoy it? By holding and hoarding it? Not at all. Read on: "that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate." The way to enjoy God's rich gifts is to share them with others. Those who give their money get most pleasure out of it. And the joy here is but a tithe of the joy it brings hereafter, for thus they "lay up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold upon life that is life indeed." With this blessing of giving contrast the curse of hoarding by fraud and holding by covetousness, as described by James. "Go to, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as

it were fire." Money hoarded will rust; but the rust gathers on the soul that hoards it, and burns it like fire. Men who refuse to do good with their money are thus in a little hell on earth. Their souls are being burnt by a slow combustion. By and by angels who see their spirits doubtless begin to look upon them as charcoals of immortality. Immortal, but charred and blackened by the fires of covetousness. That which, if used for God, becomes a treasure in heaven, when held only for self mars the best treasure we have on earth—our characters.

II. By ministering to the Needy.

Many of us have little money. Can we expect to lay up much treasure in heaven? In the 25th of Matthew we have the assets of a useful life. "I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me." Personal ministry to those from whom you expect to receive no earthly reward is a treasure in heaven. The idea of merit for such work is

excluded. The righteous could not remember that they had done anything worthy of mention. It was done for the sake of Christ, and those who work purely for His glory would not detract from that glory by claiming heaven on the merit of their good deeds. It was those who had really done nothing that were surprised to hear that they had not done enough to merit salvation. The lack of money, which brings us into personal contact with the needy, is a great blessing to us. And even if we have money, we ought not to be satisfied with working by proxy. A wealthy lady in New York determined, the week of her conversion, to employ a woman for all her time to work among the poor. She received her reports every month and rejoiced in the good being done. One day her missionary reminded her that when Jesus healed the sick He usually touched them, and suggested that it might be well for her to go with her on some of her rounds. She consented, and after one day's visiting she declared that she had been more blessed than by the whole year's working by proxy. The poor and suffering often need the hand-shake and

kind word more than they need money. Give both, and wait for the reward in heaven.

III. By rejoicing in whatever our Faithfulness to Christ may bring upon us.

"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven." While Hooper, the martyr, was at the stake, some one reminded him that life was very sweet. "Yes," he replied, "life is sweet, but eternal life is sweeter." He was willing to sacrifice the less for the greater. Demosthenes was asked if he did not fear that Philip would take off his head. "If he does," was the reply, "the Athenians will give me an immortal one." Whatever loss we sustain for the sake of Christ in this world, we may be certain that He will make it up to us in the next.

Obstacles.

The context teaches us that a double vision is in the way of our laying up treasures in

heaven. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body will be full of light," and thou wilt not make mistakes in thy investments. The man of double vision sees two objects at once without seeing either one clearly. He tries to look at two things at the same time. In his service he sees Christ and self—Christ and the world. He thinks that of course he ought to serve God, but at the same time he must look after number one. This leads to an attempt at double service, and "no man can serve two masters. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." God would not share His worship with the false gods in Israel's time; He will not now share His service with any one. It must be a whole-hearted service. You cannot serve yourself during the week and God on Sunday. Every day, every dollar must be His. "But must I not support my family?" If you do not, you are worse than an infidel. In supporting your family you may be serving God as truly as if you were preaching in a pulpit. Only put God first, and ask Him how you ought to support your family. If you have a new house to furnish, consult Him as to the furniture. Ask Him to make it plain as to what

kind of furniture will best accord with your means and the spirit of sacrifice which every Christian ought to have. Only let God be first, and family, country, business, friends—indeed, everything and everybody second.

It is said of Judge Black, of Georgia, that, when he was a young lawyer, he was invited to deliver an address of welcome to the Governor of the State on Monday evening. He took great pains to prepare his address, but a telegram came on Monday, saying that the Governor's visit would be deferred till Wednesday evening. Mr. Black at once wrote the committee that a previous engagement would prevent his being present on Wednesday evening. Few persons besides the pastor of his church knew that the previous engagement was the regular weekly prayer-meeting which the young Christian lawyer had set apart as sacredly devoted to the public worship of God; and no service to man or State, though it might be for his own promotion, could make him swerve from his purpose. He had a single vision and single-eyed service. No wonder God has blessed him. He usually honors those who honor Him.

Anxiety about the future keeps many a one from laying up treasure in heaven. The question, What shall we eat, drink, and wear on earth? leads many to lay up for the future of time and leave out of view the future of eternity. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard," said Solomon; "consider her ways and be wise." And that is good advice for to-day. We should provide for the winters we know are coming. But the ant has been the only teacher for most of us long enough. Let us listen to Jesus as He says, in substance, "Go to the birds and lilies, ye doubtful, saving ones. Consider their ways and be wiser. The birds gather not into barns, but the heavenly Father feedeth them. The lilies toil not, nor spin, and yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." If I must choose one or the other, I should rather be the bird or lily, without barn or wardrobe, trusting God for the future, than the prudent ant taking care of myself and leaving God out of mind. But, after all, there is no quarrel between Solomon's ant and the birds of Christ. Our prudent foresight should not prevent us from casting all care for the future upon God, while we meet the responsibilities of

the present; and if, to meet our present responsibilities, we find that we have no store left for winter, don't be unduly alarmed. The God of the birds is your God. "Trust in the Lord, and do good: so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed."

Inducements.

If heaven is our treasure-house, we will not be loath to give up to God the treasures of earth when He chooses to take them. You have in your home some jewels dearer to you than life. You would, of course, like to keep them; but the home on earth, much as you prize their presence in it, is not your treasure-house. God takes them, that He may in that way help you to lay up treasures in heaven. It is easier to give them up, if the treasures we prize most are in heaven. A mother, whose dissipated son lay at the point of death, asked her pastor to come and see him; and, that she might prepare her boy for his visit, she told him how, when he was a little child, he was very sick, given up by all to die; and how she prayed that he might live, even going so far as to tell God that she could not stand his death,

and that she would take all the responsibility of his living. "Mother," said the dying boy, "you made an awful mistake." That mother was laying up her treasure on earth, and could not, therefore, bear to lose one from her treasure-house. Those whose treasures are in heaven will be saved from such an awful mistake.

If our treasures are in heaven, it will be easy, when the time comes, for us to go to them. "Where the treasure is, there will the heart be also." The soldier, as he leaves home where his treasures are, feels that the weight of the whole house is on his heart, and he goes from a sense of duty. But when the discharge is given after the victory has been won, how gladly he hastens to his loved ones! A gentleman in Brooklyn said that, during his passage across the Atlantic, he was sea-sick every day; but after six months of sight-seeing, he was glad to go on board for another eight days of nausea. What made him willing was, that all his dear ones were on this side. It was the desire to go to his treasures. Laying up treasures in heaven is a good preparation for an exchange of worlds.

Laying up treasures in heaven makes us "use this world as not abusing it." If all our treasures are on earth, we are apt to be the slaves of the earth's maxims and money. The Sermon on the Mount is very practical. It deals largely with our relations to one another. And the most practical men on this earth to-day are the men who are brave enough to do right, whether riches or poverty follow, because they are not living simply for what this world can give. They are the only real freemen. Such men were the reformers who died for truth. They are not the slaves, but the masters of the spirit of the age. They seek the highest good of all, rather than the good opinion of any. They use their money in helping others. They are independent, caring little for life or death, but everything for the true and the right. Their face is toward the sunrise. No darkness can discourage them; no reverses can overwhelm them. They wish to be and do rather than to seem. They are the real men and women. God help us to be such!

XV.

SHADOW AND SUBSTANCE.

"Our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding."—1 CHRON. 29 : 15.

A SHADOW IS NOTHING.

IT is the absence of something. Take away light, and the nothing that remains is shadow. Put ten thousand shadows together, and you have nothing. Nothing multiplied by billions is nothing. And our days on the earth are as a shadow in that they are nothing in length compared with the great substance, eternity, that lies before us. A bird comes to this world every thousand years and takes away in its beak one grain of sand, and after the entire globe has been removed, a grain at a time every thousand years, eternity has just begun. An angel strokes with a feather a ball of steel as big as this earth, once in ten thousand years, and

after the earth-size ball of steel has been worn away by the feather-stroke, eternity has just begun. We cannot grasp the illustrations. But we can see how as nothing is the little speck of time that marks the limit of human life.

Treated as an end of living this little time is nothing in importance; but, as a means to an end, it is everything, because it is all we have. As the means of preparing for eternity, who can estimate the importance of these few years? A general has just fifteen minutes to put his disordered army in line of battle before the enemy marches against him. Let him be quick about it—his honor and happiness for all the future depend upon the issue! A nation in chains or a nation free will be the result. The general sits down to a game of cards, declaring that he must enjoy the fifteen minutes at his disposal. Fool! fool!! you say, and we agree with you. Those fifteen minutes as a means to an end were all-important. Every second of them was of diamond worth. But as an end, used for the little pleasure they could give, they were a shadow indeed. Shame upon any general who would try to gather up the shadow

while he forgets the substance to which the shadow leads. In condemning him, we do but condemn the men and women who spend time in seeing how much pleasure they can get out of it—while they forget eternity, to which time is leading. We laugh at the poor fool whom David Crockett found fighting his shadow in a freshly ploughed field as a preparation for the fighting he expected to do on the following election day; but it is too serious a matter to laugh about when we see immortal men treating the shadows of life as if they were the only true substance. The sight made our Lord weep, and we may well mingle our tears with His.

THE DAYS OF THE WICKED ARE AS A SHADOW IN THAT THEY ARE POISONOUS, DARK, AND GLOOMY.

The plant that grows in the dark generates poison. Continuous darkness depresses, withers, kills. I have read of some cruel experimenters in science who kept a poor boy in a dark cell from the age of five to twenty. When he came out he was blind, emaciated, tremulous,

and idiotic. Whether the story is true or not, it might be true. It is sadly true, morally and spiritually, with those who prefer the darkness of unbelief to the light of faith. And when they take time to reflect they must be conscious of it. The sins of the past are darkness. The sinful nature of the present is darkness. The future with its terrible results is darkness. Not a ray of hope pierces its gloom. The future grows darker and darker till it strikes the "blackness of darkness forever" of which Jude speaks. A busy life may make you forget it, the whirl of pleasures may drive it from mind; but in moments of reflection you must admit that gloom gathers about you. Thoughts of God and eternity sadden and depress. A life spent in sin is a shadow of worse than Egyptian darkness. Truly it can be felt, for it pierces the soul like black daggers.

THE DAYS OF A CHRISTIAN, ON THE OTHER HAND, ARE AS A SHADOW IN THAT THEY ARE REFRESHING AND PLEASANT.

See that caravan toiling across the desert! Their water-supply is out. Weary, foot-sore,

with parching lips and heated brows, they trudge along almost ready to drop down and die. But look yonder in the distance! On the horizon there is an appearance like trees. Is it a mirage? They quicken their pace, hope and fear struggling for the mastery. The outlines of the trees are more distinct. Strength returns, while they run in their eagerness to reach the cool, refreshing spot. Now they are in the shade, lying on the green grass and drinking from the crystal spring that gurgles up before them. They look out upon the desert about them with gratitude that they have escaped its scorching rays and blistering sands. How refreshing the shadows that now protect them, only those who have had their experience can conceive.

Do you not remember a time when you were trudging through the desert of your sins, the scorching heat of conviction blistering your soul? Weary, thirsty, fainting, ready to die, you caught a glimpse through some promise in the Bible of rest and refreshment beneath the atoning merit of Jesus Christ. You hastened to Him and found rest for your soul. Your thirst was quenched, and you have the

assurance that no thirst will ever return that cannot be quenched in Him. Safe, you now look out upon the desert of sin, through which you have come, with exultant gratitude. You are under the shadow of "a great rock in a weary land," with the trees that bear sweetest fruits growing about you. From their boughs you pluck, eat, and rejoice. Yet you will find some in the blistering desert of sin sagely telling those who live in the refreshing shades of God's love and mercy that they do not think the Christian's life is a happy one. How do you know? Did you ever try it? You have never for a moment known what it is to repose under the shadow of God's wing. You are a blind man criticising color, a deaf man criticising music. You have no right to an opinion until you have tried the service of God as faithfully as you have the service of sin. Those of us who have tried both are of David's opinion, that it is better to be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

It is better to have one hour of the pure joy Christ gives than years of the pleasures of sin. You are not a competent witness until

you have tested Christ. Give Him your heart and life; and, if He does not treat you better than the Devil has, then say so. But don't express any opinion until you can know from personal experience what you are talking about. There are some who call themselves Christians whose faces look like a funeral procession. But their funereal character is caused by their lack of what God would have them possess.

Heaven, our final home, is a very happy place; and our Father wants us to be happy every step of the journey thither. "Rejoice evermore." "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." I tell you there is nothing funereal in the religion of Paul.

THE DAYS OF ALL ON EARTH ARE AS A SHADOW IN THAT THEY TELL US WHAT THE SUBSTANCE WILL BE.

Shadow implies substance. If I see the shadow of a house, horse, or man, I look up expecting to see a house, horse, or man. The shadow outlines the substance. Tell me how you spend these days of shadow, and I will tell you on the authority of God's Word how you will spend the substance, eternity.

This life is certainly an index to the life beyond. Is your life here one of faith in Christ, obedience to His will, struggle against sin, service to God and man, the substance that follows will be heaven. I cannot tell you all of it. Its golden streets, jasper walls, and pearly gates show that it is a place prepared in no niggardly way. It means love, holiness, harmony, perfect service, and the infinite joy that is sure to accompany these things. Put together all the words in Webster's Dictionary that mean something good, and then write on a page by itself in large letters the word HEAVEN as equal to them all, and you have about the reality. It is surely worth while to spend the shadows of earth in God's service with the hope of such a substance before us.

On the other hand, if your life is spent in unbelief, sin, and selfishness, the substance will be hell. It is a hard word, and a harder fact. Take all the words in the dictionary that mean something bad, and write opposite them in great black letters this one word HELL. It means the terrible results of sin—its guilt, pollution, penalty, and power; sin working in

an immortal soul, and burning like a fire, hotter and more terrible than the fires that consume the body. Such will be the substance for those who spend the shadow to the end, forgetful of God. You have heard of the jester in an Eastern court whose king gave him a staff, with the request that he give it to the first man he might meet who was a bigger fool than himself. After several years the king took sick and was given up to die. He told the jester that he must soon leave him. "Where are you going?" asked the jester. "I am going on a long journey into the future, and I have made no preparation for it." "Did you know that you were going to make such a journey?" "Yes." "How long have you known it?" "All my life." "And, knowing it all your life, you have made no preparation for it?" "None at all." "Then you are the man," said the fool, "to whom at your own request I ought to give this staff." Whether the story be true or not, it brings home to us the folly of making no preparation in the shadow for the substance we are so rapidly approaching.

IN THE LAST PLACE, OUR DAYS ON THE EARTH ARE AS A SHADOW IN THAT THERE IS NONE ABIDING.

Shadows shift, and change, and disappear. One great shadow may absorb another. The shadow of the trees may be absorbed by the denser shadow of the clouds. And so death comes to the unbeliever like a greater shadow absorbing the shadow of his days. Death is simply passing from one shadow into another denser and darker. Another way of banishing shadows is to let in bright light with equal intensity from every direction. Such is the Christian's experience as he passes from the shadows of earth into the light of heaven. There are no shadows there, because the light on all subjects is perfect. Mental light, moral light, spiritual light, light of knowledge as to God's dealing with us and God's laws in nature, will be so bright that the shadows of ignorance, through which we walk here, will flee away before it. Death is, therefore, to the Christian not a skeleton with drawn scythe, but a radiant messenger of light. To the unbeliever it is indeed a monster of hid-

eous mien, whose mission is to lead him into the "blackness of darkness forever." Well may he shrink from its clammy touch!

An unknown poet has graphically sketched the feeling with which different persons come to the end of their life shadows:

There is a stream whose narrow tide
The known and unknown worlds divide,
Where all must go;
Its waveless waters, dark and deep,
'Mid sullen silence downward sweep
With moanless flow.

I saw there at the dreary flood
A smiling infant prattling stood,
Whose time was come:
Untaught of ill, it neared the tide,
Sank as to cradled rest, and died
Like going home.

Followed with languid eyes anon
A youth diseased and pale and wan,
And there alone:
He gazed upon the leaden stream
And feared to plunge: I heard a scream
And he was gone.

And then a form in manhood strength
Came bustling on till there at length
He saw life's bound:

He shrank, and raised the bitter prayer:
Too late—his shriek of wild despair
The waters drowned.

Next stood upon the surgeless shore
A being bowed with many a score
Of toilsome years:
Earth-bound and sad he left the bank,
Back turned his dimming eyes, and sank
So full of fears.

How bitter must thy waters be,
O death! how sad a thing to me
It is to die!
I mused—when to that stream again
Another child of mortal man
With smiles drew nigh:

"'Tis the last pang," he calmly said;
"To me, O death, thou hast no dread:
Saviour, I come;
Spread but Thine arms on yonder shore—
I see. Ye waters, bear me o'er:
There is my home."

XVI.

DISCIPLESHIP.

"Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed on Him, If ye continue in My word, ye are My disciples indeed:

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."—JOHN 8 : 31, 32.

As soldiers, we fight "the good fight of faith;" as sheep, we follow the Shepherd; as stewards, we guard and use the treasures He has given us; as disciples, we sit at His feet and learn.

The heart-thought of the text is discipleship, and around this centre cluster its basis, its test, its fruit, and its glory.

I. THE BASIS OF DISCIPLESHIP.

It is faith in Christ. "Jesus said to those Jews who *believed on Him*." It is not faith in

a creed, though every word of it may be true. It is not faith in a church, though it be the church founded by Christ Himself. It is not faith in an ordinance, though established by the Lord. It is not faith even in a book, though every word of it be inspired. It is faith in a Person—the Lord Jesus Christ. Believing not *about* Him, but *in* Him, resting your hope of salvation completely *on* Him.

II. The Test of Discipleship.

It is twofold, made up of time and truth. "If ye *continue*, ye are My disciples indeed." Time is the test that tries the soil and the seed. The seed that fell upon stony places sprang up suddenly, but in a little while withered. It could not stand the test of time. Some of these Jews, under a temporary impulse, expressed their faith in Christ. To-morrow, among unsympathetic and persecuting Pharisees, they may deny Him. Continuance is the test. Only the man who continues has really begun.

And it is continuance in the word of Christ: "If ye continue in My word, ye are My dis-

ciples indeed." What is meant by "My word?" Only the utterances of Jesus, or the whole Word to which He subscribed? In His prayer for the disciples He said: "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth." "Thus saith the Lord" rings through the prophets, and Christ put His name to the writings of Moses, the Psalms, and the prophets. So that what we call the Bible may be, in a very true sense, called the Word of Christ. The tendency of the times is not to continue in that Word, but rather to criticise it; not to seek to cultivate faith in it, but rather to upset faith.

And the lack of Biblical knowledge which some of the critics show is amusing, if not alarming. I read of one the other day who said he could not accept that story about the ark: he was a dealer in lumber, and the ark was 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high, and if it had been filled with food and animals, it must have weighed thousands of tons. "Now," he said, "you cannot make me believe that men could carry such a thing as that through the wilderness." His mixture of the arks is a fair sample of the mixture of facts

for which some critics of the Bible are noted. They dip into the Word here and there, read magazine articles on it, books about it, but have never carefully and persistently studied it. May we seek to continue in the Word rather than to criticise it!

I believe that the Bible can stand every test of honest criticism. I like to see the old Book tried by all fair methods. It can take care of itself; it needs no defenders. It has stood the onslaught of ages, and in times past its enemies were stronger than they are now. But the test of discipleship is not finding fault with the Word, but continuing in it.

III. The Fruit of Discipleship.

"Ye shall know the truth." Pilate's question, "What is truth?" is here answered. If ye would know truth, believe in Him who is the truth, and continue in His Word. John Newton, as he grew old, lost his memory, but he used to say, "Two things I can never forget: I am a great sinner, and Jesus Christ is a great Saviour." Such knowledge of the truth makes a man broad and narrow. The

fact that he loves spiritual truth makes him sympathize all the more with moral, scientific, and historic truth. The realm of truth is one, ruled by the God of truth. The Bible and nature belong to the same empire. But truth can never sympathize with falsehood any more than light can with darkness, disease with health, honesty with roguery, virtue with vice. There is a breadth of latter times in which many see great beauty; a sympathy with everything and a holding to nothing tenaciously. I saw a broad river the other day, 250 yards wide, running through the mountains over stones, down the cataract, eddying in quiet pools; and after a while it narrowed down to about 40 feet in width, and there it was 100 feet deep, running with the swiftness of an arrow. At this narrow place men think of building their factories; there is the place of power. And the man who would be broader than what he believes to be true loses power in proportion to his breadth. He who is willing to be as broad as all truth, and not a whit broader, will have the power that goes with truth blessed by the God of truth.

IV. The Glory of Discipleship.

"The truth shall make you free." It does not help us to free ourselves. It makes us free. Some prisoners in Malta during a plague were offered their liberty on condition that they leave their isolated cells and nurse the afflicted. They accepted the condition, and thus won their liberty. Christ does better than that for us: He not only shows how we may be free, but He makes us free. He breaks the shackles; He issues the Emancipation Proclamation, and stands ready with the arm of His omnipotence to enforce the decree that every one who believes in Him shall be free.

Freed from what? From sin, of course. Past sins often hound us; sins never get out of date. But Jesus Christ frees us from the guilt and penalty of every past sin.

Three prisoners in a Wisconsin penitentiary escaped by digging a tunnel after the fashion of the Libby Prison tunnel. They worked on it two years, and finally at an opportune time made their escape. In the fresh, free air, they

felt very happy; but in less than ten days the officers of the law had put them behind the walls again and stopped up the tunnel. Their temporary freedom did not last. But the man who has been freed by Jesus Christ shall never be brought into condemnation. His guilt has been annihilated. He stands now before God as if he had never sinned.

> "Oh, for such grace let rocks and hills
> Their lasting silence break,
> And all harmonious human tongues
> The Father's praises speak!"

Again, the truth frees us from the law. Lazarus is liberated from his grave-clothes. Love takes the place of law. A home governed by rules is apt to be a prison. A school where nobody is put on his honor, but everything must work by rule, is not apt to be well governed. Some boys have no honor to be put upon, so that they must be treated as convicts; but when the scholars love the truth and the teacher, it is safer to let love and honor rule. I read the other day of a man and his wife in Iowa, who discovered after they were

married that they were not happy; so they drew up a matrimonial contract, in which the wife promised not to scold or quarrel and to perform all her duties, on condition that the husband would give her for all needs one hundred dollars a month. They were soon in court, the husband protesting that the wife had not fulfilled her condition, and the wife charging that the husband had failed to fulfil his. The result was a suit for divorce. But you know of homes where love is law: the father rules by love; the wife is the queen of love. No law is needed, for love is the fulfilling of law. Such a home is an anthem of harmony day by day.

We are freed from ceremonial law. Men who are the slaves of sin are sometimes bound by ceremonial law. Two burglars were heard conversing during Lent. One said to the other: "Jack, I know where there is a safe with one hundred thousand dollars in it; let 's crack it to-night!" "I am not the man," said Jack, "to crack a safe during Lent. We should practise self-denial." After Lent was over he was ready for the safe-cracking, and with no qualm of conscience. The truth as it is in Jesus frees us

from law, and yet leads us lovingly to obey the law without feeling its restraint.

We are freed from habit—bad habit, if you please: the habit, for instance, of drink and tobacco. Now let us be careful. We may hurt some tender conscience. There is a difference, I think, between tobacco and alcohol, though not so much as many suppose, for much tobacco is at least one tenth alcohol. But when a man becomes the slave of tobacco, he is not very different from the slave of drink. It may not lead him to abuse his wife and children, but he is not a free man. Now, if you have ever said: "I cannot quit tobacco," make up your mind to do it or die. Say as Mr. Henson of Chicago, when he found that he was a slave to the weed, laying his cigar on the table, said: "You black rascal, I will not serve you any longer." The truth as it is in Jesus can free any sort of slave from any sort of habit.

Even from a good habit we sometimes need to be freed. Men may perform religious duties by routine until they become mere machines. They act not from principle. I have heard of a dog belonging to a Pres-

byterian elder, which went to church every Sunday, slept in front of the pulpit during the sermon, shook himself during the doxology, and walked out with a joyful expression. The old Presbyterian elder died, and a Baptist deacon bought his farm. The dog remained on the farm, went with the Baptist family to the village the next Sunday, and on arriving at the Presbyterian church he was surprised that the family did not turn in as usual, but he went in, lay down before the pulpit, slept through the sermon, went home after the service, and for five or six years, as long as his dogship lived, he kept up the habit of attending his own church. He could not be induced to change his denominational relation. There was no principle involved; it was simply the force of habit. Just as that dog went to church by force of habit, we often go through family prayers, reading the Bible, and other religious duties, in the most mechanical way. If we truly believe in Christ, continue in His Word, and know the truth, we shall be freed from mechanism. The life principle within us will work. And that brings me to say, lastly, that all this freedom must come from within,

not from without. Men are to be saved by the Gospel rather than by law. The sheriff and the penitentiary can never redeem the soul. Now I believe in punishing criminals: men that break the law ought to be put behind iron bars—Christian sentiment should demand it; but the old warden of the Ohio penitentiary was right when he called his institution the impenitentiary, for he said he rarely ever turned out any penitents. The freedom of soul we seek must come through an inward knowing of the truth. It must be as fruit upon the tree of faith and knowledge.

One of the master painters has left a striking picture. It represents the scene in the wilderness when the Israelites were bitten by fiery serpents. The serpent of brass is gleaming on the hill. A group of bitten, horror-stricken men and women are tearing the serpents from their arms and sides. Yonder is another group covered with serpents, bowing before Moses, and with clasped hands are pleading for deliverance; but Moses cannot help them, and other serpents strike as soon as one is torn away. But the majority of the people are looking toward the serpent of

brass, and the serpents are falling off as dead from their persons. There is no need of tearing them away. The picture illustrates two methods that are prevalent: one is to save from sin by external means, tearing the evil from us; and the other is by taking into our hearts the life which develops and strengthens, and casts out the evil. That brings true liberty—the only liberty that will last. "If ye continue in My word, ye are My disciples indeed: and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

XVII.

CONSTRAINING LOVE.

"The love of Christ constraineth us."—2 Cor. 5 : 14.

Does this mean the love of Christ for us, or our love for Christ? Evidently the love of Christ for us, though by implication our love for Christ. "We love Him because He first loved us." Our love is kindled at the altar of Christ's love. Our purpose in this discourse, however, is to study the word "constrain." I believe in plenary inspiration, not in a mechanical theory. John wrote as John, Peter as Peter, Paul as Paul; the Holy Spirit not making them automatons or machines, but using their different personalities. When I am convinced that a chapter or verse is not an interpolation, but contains the words that were written by inspired minds, then to me that scripture is verbally inspired. God speaks not

through sentences, paragraphs, or books, but through words. One word at least is inspired. "Not seeds, as of many," said Paul, "but seed." The Spirit was particular to give us the singular rather than the plural. Some words are like gold mines with a few nuggets on the surface—an index to the rich ores which lie beneath; and such is this word "constrain." Let us dig into it.

The first thing we learn is:

I. Unity and Community.

It means primarily—*binds us together.* The love of Christ unites us. The love of country unites men. When the tocsin of war sounds, merchants, mechanics, lawyers, doctors, common laborers, rally to the flag, though many of them may speak different languages—French, German, Italian standing in the ranks side by side, moving as one man. They have a common purpose, born of a common love. The heterogeneous mass has been melted by the fires of patriotism, fused into the same mould. So the love of Christ binds men together, though they be far apart in channels

of thought, in nationality, language, occupation. I defy any one to meditate an hour on the love of Christ for him, and then cherish in his heart hatred toward his neighbor.

As the result of this unity, there will be community. The early disciples had all things in common. It was brought about not by statute law, but by love. A conception of the love of Christ, as manifested in the sacrifice of Himself upon Calvary, had gotten hold of them, and His spirit of sacrifice showed itself in their yielding what they had for the supply of the community. Love begotten by the love of Christ abhors a vacuum. It seeks to fill the place of want and woe. But could such a state of affairs exist forever? If the same love reigned, it would be in active operation to-day.

II. Perplexity and Distress.

Paul said, "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better" (Phil. 1:23). The word translated "in a strait" is this word "constrain." Two forces were drawing Paul —

heaven and earth; the desire to be at rest, and to toil on; his anxiety to be with Christ, and the obligation which he felt to remain and help his brethren.

So the love of Christ sometimes perplexes us; puts us "in a strait betwixt two." The love of parents may draw in one direction, while the love of Christ draws in another, and the result is great perplexity as to our duty. "When I would do good, evil is present with me." My love for Christ makes me want to do good, while my fleshly nature inclines me to evil. Blessed perplexity this! Better to be perplexed by these two contending forces than that the evil should have it all its own way and leave us in the rest of a deadened conscience. And to perplexity there is often added distress. "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!" said Jesus. "Straitened" here is this word "constrained." Before Christ was Gethsemane and Calvary, an immersion of suffering. His love for us drew Him toward it, while the shrinking of the flesh, as seen in the garden, drew Him from it. His love for us constrained Him, pressed Him toward

Calvary, until the suffering was over. So the love of Christ constrains us to accept whatever Calvary may be put in our way, whatever suffering for the good of others God may call upon us to endure.

III. Restraint.

"For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side" (Luke 19:43).

The word translated "keep in" is this word "constrain." The army of Titus had besieged Jerusalem, encompassing it, and holding the inhabitants within the walls. They could not sally forth; they were prisoners. And the love of Christ bears something of the relation to us that this besieging army of Titus bore toward the Jews. It keeps us from going out into doubtful indulgences, unrestrained passions—ways that God would not approve. We are under a blessed restraint; not of power, but of love. The mother is restrained from injuring her child, but it is a restraint which is joy, and the liberty of hurting her

child would be painful to her. We are told in Luke 22:63, "The men that held Jesus mocked Him, and smote Him." This word "held" is the "constrain" of the text; the Roman soldiers held Him as a prisoner. Their object was to humiliate Him. The love of Christ, however, holds us as prisoners for the purpose of elevating, inspiring, and comforting us. A delightful condition, indeed, to be a prisoner of the love of Jesus Christ! The world is led captive by the Devil at his will; the Christian, by Jesus at His will: one hypnotized of evil; the other of good. The world is led by the sirens' song toward destruction; the Christian is drawn by the angelic music of Christ's love toward heaven.

And this encompassing, protecting power shuts out evil. The besieging army of Titus, while it kept the Jews within the walls, kept other enemies from approaching. The Roman soldiers kept others from the person of Christ. They would not deliver Him to the mob who howled for His blood. The same idea we find in Acts 7:57. Those who stoned Stephen "cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one ac-

cord." The word translated "stopped" is this word "constrained." They shut out the cries of the people, and made themselves deaf to everything that would keep them from accomplishing their purpose. And so the love of Christ shuts out the forces that would keep us from doing what He commands.

IV. Pressure.

Jesus is on His way to the house of Jairus. A great multitude crowd around Him and throng Him. He said, "Who touched Me?" The disciples replied, "The multitude throng Thee and press Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched Me?" (Luke 8:45). This word "pressed" is the "constrain" of our text. How beautiful the thought! Love throngs and presses us like that multitude about our Lord.

There is the pressure of blessing. Political blessings crowd us. We have civil liberty. We may worship God as our conscience dictates. Persecution by thumb-screw and rack is forever gone. Social blessings press upon us. We have close about us many in sympathy

with our hopes and aspirations, and who unite with us in work for God. Physical blessings; God gives us health. Literary blessings; we may fill our homes with good books. Gospel blessings; the Bible full of promises, and God's providence full of love. Such a pressure of blessings the love of Christ causes to throng us.

But with this there is the pressure of obligation. We are told in Acts 18:5, "Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ." The word translated "pressed in spirit" is our friend "constrain." It was the pressure of responsibility. Paul had the bread of life, and he felt that he ought to give it to others. He believed in Christ, and he was pressed to say so. Now this is a burden which we cannot cast upon others. God, even, will not bear it. There are other burdens of sorrow, sin, and struggle that we may cast upon Him, and He will sustain us. There are burdens which we may share with each other, and we are commanded to bear one another's burdens; but here "Let every one bear his own burden." No man can do my duty for me. No one can take my place. No one can obey

God by proxy; and heavier than all other responsibilities of life is the responsibility of testifying, through character as well as words, for Christ.

During a naval battle, an English vessel had been swept by shot and shell. More than one half of the marines were dead or dying; their bodies covered the deck. Captain Haldane ordered the reserves to come up and take the places of the slain, and when they reached the deck and saw the bodies and blood of their slain companions, they were seized with a panic. The captain drew his sword, and rushing before them said, "Cowards that you are—I wish you were in h——!" An old Scotch marine went quietly up to the captain, and saluting him, said, "I believe that God answers prayer, and if your prayer had been answered, where would we be?" After the battle the captain thought of the faithfulness of this old marine, who had been slain during the conflict. It led him to reflection, to prayer, to Christ. Captain Haldane became a preacher in the city of Edinburgh, and through his influence Robert Haldane, whose voice shook Geneva as he proclaimed the Gospel, was converted; all

traceable back to the faithful testimony which the old Scotch marine bore to Christ in that critical hour. More weighty than the responsibility of fighting for his country; more weighty than submission to his superior; more weighty than the terror of the bloody scene before him was the responsibility of testifying for Christ. The love of Christ constrained to it.

A physician in Holland, once a Jew, now a Christian, became greatly interested in an old Jewish friend, wealthy and honored. He was so pressed in spirit that he determined to go over and have an hour's talk with him one evening. When he arrived at the palatial residence of his friend, he found a party gathering; a number of the guests were there. He went in, shook hands with his friend, and told him that he had called upon an important mission; but it seemed inopportune, and he would wait until a more convenient season. The Jewish friend, his curiosity aroused, insisted that he should make his mission known. "Well, it was that we might talk together about the Messiah. I think I have found Him, and I want to tell you about Him." "Why," replied the wealthy old Jew, "I have been

thinking about that of late myself, and was anxious to talk to somebody about it. Come in, and before the festivities begin you can talk to us all on the subject." And the faithful witness stood before the company, and testified that Jesus was the Christ. The result was the conversion of his Jewish friend and some of the guests. The love of Christ pressed upon him the responsibility of saving others. "By all means," said Paul, "save some."

V. Enthusiasm.

In Luke 4:38 we read, "Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever." That word "taken" is "constrained." The fever had possession of her. The same word is used in Matthew 4:24: "Taken with divers diseases and torments." The love of Christ takes hold of me like a fever—like an incurable disease; like a demoniacal possession. Does not that imply something of fanaticism? Can we keep a cool head while we have a heart raging with such a fever of love? Better a thousand fold love at fever heat, love holding us like a de-

moniacal possession, than the cold iceberg, freezing state of dignified inactivity. "The people of the Gadarenes," we are told, "were taken with great fear." "Taken" is "constrained" again. Christ had cast out a devil, sending the swine into the water. They were trembling in the presence of his power, so that they hardly knew what to do. They were held captives by their fear, as Simon's wife's mother was by fever. So we need to be held captives by the love of Christ, and keep at the point of warm enthusiasm in his service.

XVIII.

PURE RELIGION.

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."—JAMES I : 27.

THE word "religion" is used but five times in the Bible. This is the only passage in which it is approved and commended. Paul says that he lived, "after the strictest sect of his religion, a Pharisee." He speaks in two other places of the "Jews' religion," and in the verse just preceding this he describes a class of men whose "religion" is vain. Through a man's religious instincts he may be degraded or elevated. The heathen are more debased by their religion than by any other force.

The only kind of religion that is worth having is the "pure and undefiled." The

word "pure" describes its inward quality. It is the word used in the beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart," and again in the Scripture, "Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." It is a religion washed in the blood of Christ; our whole religious nature purified by taking Christ into it and making Him king of it. The word "undefiled" refers to the outward quality. It means primarily unstained, unvarnished. That which is washed white needs not to be whitewashed. A religion pure inside is apt to be undefiled outside.

This religion, "pure and undefiled," is presented to us in two aspects: First, as helpful contact with the needy. Second, as guarded separation from the world.

I. Helpful Contact.

To visit means more than to drop in for a call, to talk about the weather. It means more than going from house to house as pastor and checking off the names which you have visited. It is the word used where the apostles are commanded to look out seven

men of good report. We are not to sit down and wait for people to come to us to be helped and saved, but we must look them out. And it carries with it the idea of ministry: "The dayspring from on high hath visited us." The "dayspring" there certainly refers to Christ, so that just as Christ visited the world and ministered to it, so we are to visit the orphans and widows in their afflictions. The word "orphans" is the same that Jesus used when He said, "I will not leave you comfortless" (orphans). Imagine, if you can, the condition of the disciples if Jesus had left them without sending the Holy Spirit as guide, protector, helper in their bewilderment, their helplessness, their need! We are, therefore, commanded to keep ourselves in helpful contact with everybody who answers to the class of these disciples in that condition.

The word "orphan," without father or mother, represents an orphaned world. There are needs of the soul as deep as the needs of the body, and people may have plenty of wealth while they are orphaned from God. "In their affliction" shows the condition of these needy ones. It is not my duty to seek

out the fatherless who are wealthy enough not to need my help, and the widows who are not widows indeed, and independent of others' assistance. I would thus keep the letter of the law, while I violated its spirit. The word "affliction" means primarily pressure. "Pressed above strength and beyond measure," said Paul—the same word. Wherever a man, woman or child, under the pressures of life, crushed beneath its burdens, can be found, "pure religion and undefiled" will lead me to put myself in helpful contact with them. Simply sending a check does not suffice, nor standing above, and touching with kid gloves in a patronizing way, for "kid gloves are non-conductors." As Jesus put Himself, a man among men, comforting, strengthening, feeding, helping, so "pure religion" would lead us to be among our fellows as a real helper to them under the burdens of life.

A little boy finding an old newspaper seller on a corner of a street in Chicago, so hoarse that he could not cry his papers, volunteered with his strong young voice to sell the old man's papers for him. That was the spirit which helps the helpless, and to that boy the

old man was as the orphan and the widow. A little girl heard her mother speak of Christ as very poor, not having where to lay His head. "If I had been there, mamma, I would have given Him my pillow," said the child. Such is the spirit which "pure religion and undefiled" makes; and in helping the needy, especially of the household of faith, we help Christ. They are His representatives upon earth, and in helping them we help Him. The desire thus to help is certain to be gratified. Adoniram Judson prayed during his lifetime that he might be a missionary to the Jews in some way, and, while he was in his last sickness, his wife read from the *Watchman* of a Jew in Constantinople, who, having accepted Christ himself, had been translating the "Life of Judson" for his own people, and the effect of that little book among them had been to induce them to send for a missionary to lead them into the light. The news so agitated Judson that he could not control his feelings. "Wife," he said, "who would have thought that God, instead of answering my prayers by using me in person as a missionary, should use my life?" His desire to put himself in

contact with this needy people God answered by carrying him thus through the book to them.

That good Christian woman in New York who was not satisfied with simply paying the salary of a missionary among the poor, but went with her and came in contact with the needy, is a living illustration of this truth. The blessing that she received by contact with suffering was to her as great as the ministry she carried to others. This helpful contact with the needy reacts in blessing upon ourselves.

II. A Guarded Separation.

The word "keep" has in it the idea of guarding. It is the word used where we are told that the soldiers guarded Jesus: "They sat down and watched Him there." Protection is the idea. Now if we have fulfilled the first condition of the text, we need not be careful about the second. The man who is all the time in helpful contact with the needy, striving to do good, seeking to save souls, is sure to

keep himself "unspotted from the world." This activity is his safety. In a very sweet sense, "the Lord is our keeper." We commit ourselves to Him, feeling assured that "He will keep that which we have committed unto Him against that day." But there is another sense in which we are to keep ourselves: "Keep thyself pure." "Whosoever is born of God keepeth himself." Faith is not presumption. The Lord Jesus would not cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple in order that the Father might simply display His power in keeping Him from harm. So we need the cautious spirit.

The word "unspotted" is very suggestive; it means *not bespattered.* Keep thyself in such relation to the world as not to be spattered by it. We can thus be in the world and not of it, and so deport ourselves toward it that the purity of our religion shall not be spattered by its pollution. I have known men who were good Christians, pure in heart, but in business and social relations had become spattered. They went into business determined to be honest; but the atmosphere in which they

moved, the maxims of men with whom they came in contact, so influenced them that their very honesty was spattered by the dishonesty of others. Oh, how many good men have had their characters spattered by doubtful actions, by some mistake they have made, by not being thoroughly and at all times true to their convictions!

I was hurrying across Fulton Street the other day, on my way to an appointment in the country. It was just after a rain, and, as I started across, a wagon came lumbering by, and spattered me with mud from head to foot. Imagine my feelings! Dare I go out to Orange to make an address, as was my purpose, before a thousand people, thus spattered all over with mud? Those who saw me in that plight might have thought that I was cleanly enough in my habits, but certainly I was spattered, and they would think more of the spattering, doubtless, than of what I was saying. I was therefore compelled to take the time, hurried as I was, to remove the spattered mud from my clothing. And so, Christian brother, good as you may be in your heart, pure as your religion is, if you put yourself in certain

relations, the muddy wheels of the world will spatter you all over.

This kind of religion, pure and undefiled and unspattered by the world, stands the test of God's inspection. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father." I used to urge men to be careful as to their walk before men. My sermons on that subject I have laid aside. Be careful as to how you walk before God, and then you may be careless about your walk before the world. If we walk as we should before God, we are certain to walk right before the world. After all, God's opinion is what we need here and hereafter, and His "Well done" is a foretaste of heaven upon earth. I should like to be, and have you all to be, just what James Russell Lowell said Clinton B. Fisk, the Prohibition candidate for President, was:

"He stood upon the world's broad threshold; wide
The din of battle and of slaughter rose;
He saw God standing upon the weaker side
That sank in seeming loss before its foes.
Many there were who made great haste and sold
Unto the common enemy their swords;
He scorned their gifts of fame and power and gold,
And underneath their soft and flowery words

Heard the cold serpent hiss; therefore he went
And humbly joined to the weaker part;
Fanatic named, and fool, yet well content,
So he could be the nearer to God's heart,
And feel its solemn pulses sending blood
Through all the widespread veins of endless good."

XIX.

A GROWING FAITH.

"And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him."—JOHN 4 : 50.

FEW things are more interesting than the growth of a child, body and mind, from infancy to manhood; but more interesting still is the growth of the new child, the result of the second birth—growth from spiritual infancy to spiritual manhood. And in the text and context we have a growth like this. Weak faith has become strong faith. We shall trace this growth, and learn, if we can, the secret by which weak faith may become strong. Let us examine—

I. The Signs of a Weak Faith;
II. The Signs of a Strong Faith.

I. The Signs of a Weak Faith.

They are four:

1. *Demanding Visible Proof.*—"Except ye see signs and wonders," said Jesus, "ye will not believe." We desire to see. "Seeing is believing," says the old proverb; and yet we may be deceived through sight more readily than through almost any other sense. Faith based upon sight is very weak. "The devils believe and tremble." They see evidences of God's power which they cannot deny, and they tremble before it. It is really unbelief which demands visible proof. It was the unbelief of Thomas which made him say, "I will not believe till I see." And Jesus rebuked him when He said, "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." Said the rich man in Hades: "Send Lazarus that he may tell my five brethren not to come to this place of torment; if one rise from the dead they will believe." "No," said Abraham; "if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." And if I, through the power of God, could raise from the dead every corpse in Greenwood Cemetery, and march the living

men and women through the streets, Brooklyn would not believe. Men who will not hear God as He speaks through the Bible will not hear Him when He speaks through miracles.

2. *Another Sign of Weak Faith is that it must be driven to God by Overwhelming Need.* —This nobleman's son was at the point of death. Every physician had doubtless been tried, and the most skilful had given up the case. In this time of great distress the father thinks of Jesus, and starts for Him. It is like a man on a vessel in a storm at sea, when he feels the timbers cracking beneath him, and imagines the depth to which he may soon sink, calling out, "Lord, have mercy upon me!" It is like the soldier's cry, so often heard in battle, when he feels the bullet strike him: "Lord, have mercy!" It is like repentance on a death-bed—the sailor throwing all the goods overboard in a tempest, and then seeking to gather them up in the calm that follows.

Such faith is better than no faith, but it is not so good as the faith that draws us to God by gratitude and love. It is better to be driven than not to come at all; it is still better to be drawn. Doubtless this nobleman

had heard of Christ many times; but he did not go to Him. He may have had opportunities of inviting Him to his house, but he did not improve them. Not until the great sorrow comes, which he hopes Jesus may relieve, does he come to Him at all. Zaccheus, on the other hand, invited the Lord to dine with him when there was no sorrow to be relieved. His faith was, therefore, better than that of the nobleman.

Matthew invited the Lord to a feast at his house. He wished Him to share his joys. And such faith strikes me as of a higher order than that which drives us by sheer force of distress to seek relief from Christ.

3. *A Third Sign of Weak Faith is that, while it prays, it dictates to God.*—This father besought Jesus that He would *come down* and heal his son. He does not make known his wants and leave to Christ the manner in which they shall be supplied. He wants Christ to come to his house. I think I perceive the tone of patronage in this invitation. A nobleman rarely ever forgets that he is a nobleman, and he says to himself, "Only the rabble have honored Jesus. I will now invite Him to my

mansion, and be the first among the nobility to show Him respect, if He will come and heal my son"—a spirit just the opposite of the centurion's, who said, "I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come beneath my roof: but speak the word, and my servant shall be healed." Here humility dictates to Christ; but He accepts the dictation neither of patronizing pride nor of great humility. He goes uninvited to the centurion's house, and heals his servant. He refuses to go, though invited, to the nobleman's house, while He heals his son with a word. Perfect faith does not dictate to God, but much of our praying consists in this humble or patronizing dictation. We try to convince God that He is wrong in His way of doing, and we are right. Though we are greatly shocked by the blasphemy recently uttered: "If I had been present at the creation, I could have given God some advice; or, if He would consult me as to how to govern the world, I could help Him in it,"—yet we sometimes show a spirit distressingly similar.

Some tenants were ejected from a large building in New York several weeks ago. They tried to get back, for it was cold out

on the streets; but the police refused to let them enter. The reason of their refusal was that the building was about to tumble down, and they knew that for the good of the tenants it was better that they should suffer the cold than be exposed to the danger from the falling walls. And yet these tenants persisted in trying to escape the cold by putting themselves in danger. They thought they knew better than the police. The result showed that the police were the wiser. And the result will always show that God's dealings with us, though they may seem to be severe, are wise and good.

John Wesley had two preachers under his direction, named Bradburn and Duncan. Bradburn was a very eloquent man; Duncan was a rather poor preacher. When Bradburn preached, Duncan tried to be present; but when Duncan preached, Bradburn was usually absent, and it distressed Duncan. Finally he asked his Brother Bradburn why it was he did not come to hear him preach. "To tell the truth," replied Bradburn, "I cannot hear you without being greatly tempted." "And what, pray," said Duncan, "is the nature of the

temptation?" "I am always tempted to think," said Bradburn, "that I can preach better than you, and it ministers to my pride." Such is the feeling of Brother Weakfaith toward God. He has the impression that he could do better than the Lord, if he had the whole thing in hand; and it is a temptation which he needs to resist.

4. *The Fourth Sign of a Weak Faith is its Impatience.*—This father evidently became impatient: "Sir, come down ere my child die."

There is something almost of petulance in this request. It shows that he thinks it is no time now to argue. What he wants is haste, and he cannot brook delay. Our impatience with God is a sign of very weak faith.

It is comforting to know that Jesus honors even faith like this. Though impatient and dictatorial, driven by need and seeking visible evidence, He answers the prayer. He pities our weakness. "The bruised reed He will not break; the smoking flax He will not quench." The fire of trust does not blaze up; He sees more of the smoke of impatience and unbelief than of faith, but He will not allow the sparks

beneath the flax to be trampled out. The reed of our faith is very weak, but He will not allow the bird that would break it to light upon it. Indeed, He fans the sparks into a flame; He puts new life into the reed that will heal the bruises and make it strong.

A New Jersey farmer one morning heard a little wren pouring out its heart in song upon the early air. Now and then it would stop as if interrupted, and by and by continue its song again. Drawing near he noticed that the mother was teaching her young to sing. She would first sing through the whole song, and then listen to the little one sing, until it broke down, and then she would take up the song and carry it through. This was repeated until the little birds could sing the mother's song accurately. And when we break down in our song of faith, God delights to take up the strain and help us through. His strength is made perfect in our weakness; all that we lack He supplies.

You may have heard John B. Gough tell, in one of his thrilling lectures, of a scene in his own experience. Sitting in a church one morning he heard a hoarse, discordant voice

behind him, and he felt sorry that he was near such a disagreeable creature. The preacher gave out the hymn, "Just as I am, without one plea," and the discordant voice, without any melody or much tune, followed the words. While the interlude was being played before the second verse, Mr. Gough felt a hand touch his arm, and a voice saying: "Please, sir, what is the next verse? Tell me the first line: I think I might remember it." "Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind," said Gough, and, as he looked into the stranger's face, saw that he was blind. And when he heard him with his grating voice trying to sing the next lines,—

> "Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
> Yea, all I need in Thee to find,
> O Lamb of God! I come,"—

Gough said he felt that he would like to lend him what voice he had, and help him to sing if he could. And so God feels toward us when we try to serve or to believe. He would help us in our failures, and, unlike Gough, He is able to do it. He can give us just what we need. Christ honored the weak faith of this

father in order that his weak faith might become strong.

This leads us to

II. The Signs of a Strong Faith.

They, too, are four:

1. *Faith in the Word of God.*—The text tells us that "the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken." He no longer desired a sign; he could now rely upon the simple word. There was something in the tone of the voice, in the magnetic presence, as well as in what Jesus said, which went to his heart and gave him faith. And so there is something in this Word of God—a living something which goes with it and helps us to believe. I have no superstitious feeling toward the Bible. I do not regard its binding, its paper, its ink, its material make-up, as especially sacred. Webster's Dictionary is as good a book to dream by and tell fortunes by as the Bible. It is no fetich. The truth in it is the sacred thing. What it means is hallowed ground. We may treat the Bible as the patient treated the prescription of the doctor, who told him

to put it in a little water, and take it according to directions; and when the doctor returned the next day, he found the patient worse. "Have you taken my prescription?" he asked. "Yes, just as you told me. Here it is," and he handed him a glass of water in which the paper had been dissolved; and he had taken several spoonfuls of paper-pulp for medicine. Instead of doing what the prescription told him, he simply took the prescription itself. In that sense "the letter killeth."

The truth of God, ever living, is sacred. I like the spirit of the man who refused to let any book in his house lie upon the Bible. He regarded it as above all books, and hence none of his children could lay their books upon it. A wise reverence for the book is not out of place. But what I insist upon is that what the book means is more than the book itself.

The words of God are very precious, and we learn to revel in the truth itself apart from any benefit that we receive from it. A house-decorator in Buffalo, N. Y., was ordered to paper every room but one, and he was curious to know why that room was left blank. On entering, however, he saw a strange scene. On

the walls were pasted hundreds of letters, and the young lady, who was kept within doors much of her time, said that she had thus papered the walls of her room because every letter was precious to her heart. There were letters from mother, now in heaven; from friends in the skies; letters which brought up pleasant associations of childhood and school-days. Every one of them had to her a meaning; she could sit in her room and revel in these associations. And so we may have our rooms of memory filled with Scripture truths. Every one of them is suggestive of something in the past, the remembrance of which gives us delight. This one tells of victory won; that one of a sorrow borne; another of a perplexity in which we were guided; another still of some great calamity which might have crushed us but for the promise that sustained. No man can prize the Word of God too highly and depend upon it too implicitly.

2. *Another Sign of Strong Faith is Restfulness.*—This father came from home in great haste, and he was impatient at the delay of Jesus, but after Jesus had said "Thy son liveth," we find him in no hurry. Not until

next day does he start for home. He believes that his son is cured, and there is no need of hurry. Having watched, perhaps, at the bedside of his sick boy for many nights, he decides to stay in Capernaum and have a good night's rest. He sleeps until late in the morning, when he quietly takes his breakfast, and then starts leisurely toward home. The wife is uneasy about him: "Why does husband stay away so long? He, of course, does not know that our child is well;" and calling the servant she says, "Go up to Cana, and tell husband the joyful news;" and as they come he meets them, and hears from them without surprise the account of the healing. It is hardly news to him.

"He that believeth maketh not haste." He rests upon God with a quiet heart. He is willing to let God take His time, confident that God's time is better than his. He has the promise, which to the eye of faith is equal to the fulfillment. He has already entered upon the enjoyment of what is promised. The Holy of Holies is his, described by the words: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in

Thee." In this age of hurry, we need such a rest of faith.

3. *A Third Sign of Strong Faith is its Readiness to receive Confirmation.*—As the father goes homeward, he hears the echo of the words which Jesus spoke. The servants use the very language of Jesus. Jesus had said: "Thy son liveth." The servants say: "Thy son liveth." You have stood, perhaps, in the Pisa Baptistry, or on Echo Lake in New York, and heard your words brought back just as you spoke them. But an echo like this which the nobleman heard is sweeter than all the echoes in nature. The man who believes God's Word will hear, sooner or later, the echo of answer. He will hear it in fulfillment of some kind. "Faithful is He who has promised." And you will notice how ready the nobleman was to receive the confirmation of his faith. He compared the time when Christ spoke the word with the time when his son was healed, and he saw it was the same hour. Now unbelief would have suggested: "This is a remarkable coincidence, to be sure; but there is no necessary connection between the words of Jesus and the healing. He might

have gotten well anyhow." And so, when we have asked and received, the temptation too often is to take honor from God by giving credit to secondary causes. The tempter suggests: "You have what you wanted, but it might have come even without praying for it." Such is the attitude of unbelief. Faith stands ready to be confirmed by the testimony of others, and by a direct answer to a definite petition.

4. *The Last Sign of Strong Faith we will mention is its Willingness to receive Spiritual Blessing.*—We are told that the nobleman "himself believed, and all his house." The first thing he did, doubtless, when he reached home, was to search out the old Scriptures and read of the Messiah. And turning to his boy with eyes now bright with intelligence and cheeks flushed with health, he says, "You have been saved from death by the Great Physician. Are you willing now to trust Him as your Saviour from sin?" And looking into the face of his wife, he says, "Will you also trust Him?" And then turning to the other children and the servants, he gets a promise from all that they will trust the Saviour. And kneeling now with the open scroll of the Scriptures before

him, he returns thanks to God for the blessing of the child restored—better still, of a household redeemed. He has received from Jesus more than he asked. He came for the healing of his son; he has received the healing of his whole family. He came for temporal blessing; he has received spiritual blessing. He came anxious that the home on earth might be happy; he has received a home in heaven made happier. Such is God's way of dealing. He knows how to give above all we can ask or think. Great faith prizes spiritual above temporal blessings, and has the secret by which the temporal is transmuted into the eternal.

I now appeal to every one here who has been blessed of God in body, in family, in any respect. Will you not, like this nobleman and his family, permit these temporal blessings to bring to you spiritual blessings? Will you not in gratitude give your hearts to Christ? The king asked John Fletcher of Madeley, "What do you desire that I may give you?" "I want," replied Fletcher, "only more grace." The faith that seeks the spiritual is above the faith that seeks only the temporal.

XX.

DEW AND LION.

"And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people, as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver."—MICAH 5 : 7, 8.

THE twofold mission of Christianity is symbolized in these words by the dew and the lion. The dew builds up; the lion tears down and destroys.

I. THE DEW.

1. *The Work of the Dew is Silent.*—It uses no hammer. The great temple of nature, like Solomon's temple, is built without noise.

The dew works in the dark and in the light, through the vital force of nature. It disintegrates dead stone. Just what the vital force in nature is to the vegetable world, the Holy Spirit is to the spiritual world. He uses silent Christian influence as the vital force uses the dew.

This silent influence is made up of three elements: (*a*) *Character.* Not what men say or do or write, but what they are. What a man is is tenfold stronger than what he may say or do. Benjamin Franklin, with a little touch of egotism, to be sure, but with truth, said that he never carried a point by argument, but always by the force of his character. He was a very poor speaker; but what he said had Benjamin Franklin behind it, and he carried his measures. Justin Martyr said he was converted to Christianity by noticing the meekness of Christians under persecution. Seneca said of Socrates that his followers learned more ethics from his manner than from his words. Character, that works silently as the dew, we need to magnify, and endeavor to make as perfect as possible, that this quiet influence may be most potent.

(*b*) But greater than character is *Prayer.* Prayer reaches farther. Character can touch what is near; prayer can reach out and touch the distant. Elijah could not have much influence, through his character, over the priests of Baal; but by prayer he could touch God, and out of heaven came the fire that had a mighty influence. John Clough you never saw, and yet in your family prayers you can promote missions among the Teloogoos. There is an omnipresence in prayer. You go to your telephone and call up the central station that is in communication, perhaps, with a thousand other stations, and through the central station you have a sort of omnipresence. By prayer you call up the central station, and through that central station of God's omnipotence and omniscience you can touch the whole world. Character reaches out and touches those near us; prayer reaches out and touches all the world in the sweep of its power.

(*c*) But greater than prayer in some respects is *Communion with God.* When Moses came down from the mount, his face shone, though he knew it not. Bunsen said to his

wife, "I see in your face the Eternal." And there is something mighty about the man who lives with God, not simply praying so that He may put into operation the forces that will tell for good, but because he loves to pray. He dwells in the secret place of the Most High, because it is warm and light and refreshing; he lives and walks with God. There is something more powerful about that man than prayer or even character can give. His communion with God keeps him in contact with the great battery of power that sends out its forces when he is not conscious of it at all. A man like that can never be overcome. An old Scotch baron was besieged in his castle by some rival barons, who decided that they would starve him out. Week after week they continued their siege. Two or three months passed, when, as they thought he was just about ready to starve, they saw hanging over the wall a string of fresh fish. "Well," they said, "if that man has fresh fish to live on, we can never starve him out." The secret of it was that he had an underground communication with the sea, and, while they were trying to starve him, he was feast-

ing on the best fish the sea could afford. If we will just keep up this secret communication with God, getting our supplies from heaven, our souls will be fed, and the forces of evil encamped around us can never overcome us.

2. *The Work of the Dew is Gradual.*—It is difficult to hurry life. Feed an animal too much and you may kill it. The plant may be watered to death. The vital force will take just so much and no more, and you cannot hasten the processes of life. So it is with the Christian. You can't make people grow by just feeding them. Why, there are some Christians who listen to Gospel sermons for ten years, and the only effect it has upon them is to give them a sort of spiritual dyspepsia. They are fed enough, but there is little vital force to apply and appropriate it. The kingdom of heaven is as a grain of mustard-seed. Young converts cannot grow into a spiritual Samson in a few days; one cannot become an athlete in a few hours. It takes training, patience, endurance, to grow into a full Christian.

3. *The Work of the Dew is through a Wide Diffusion of Particles.*—One great drop of dew in the garden is not sufficient. There are thousands, perhaps millions of drops, and each drop just as intent upon its mission as though it were the only drop on the premises. Life in nature works not through the bulk, but through the atom, the smallest possible part. And so it is with the Christian's influence upon the world. God does not put one great man in a place to do all the work. Every member should be a drop of dew, intent upon its mission.

4. *The Work of the Dew is Persistent.*—Silent forces are most persistent; they don't make any noise, but just keep at it all the time. And the silent influences sometimes go on after the force that put them into operation has disappeared. The sun rising upon the dew dissipates it, but it does not dissipate the beauty it has painted on the lily, nor the strength it has given the cedar. After you are dead, Christian parent, your character, your prayer and communion with God, are going to live in your children. John Quincy Adams, great as he was, prayed till

his dying day, "Now I lay me down to sleep." He said he prayed it because he learned it at his mother's knee. Daniel Webster was not one of the most religious men, to be sure, but he had great confidence in the piety and religion of his mother. One day in Boston, after a great address, flowers were showered upon the orator. He looked at them and enjoyed their sweet odor, but, as he was passing out with a friend, a little girl stepped up and handed him two or three garden pinks. The great orator took them in his hand and wept as he thought of the past. "That is the flower my mother loved above every other flower in the garden," and the sight of the old familiar pink brought before him the sincerity and power of his mother's character. The dew disappears, but the life forces are at work still. Depend upon it, if you are true to God, true to your faith in Jesus Christ, after you have passed out of sight, the life forces that you have put in motion will continue to work.

II. The Lion.

But Christians as the dew are only the half of Christianity. As well have a boat with one oar as Christianity with only silent influences, whether they come from character, or prayer, or communion with God. "The remnant shall be as a lion among the Gentiles, as a lion amid the beasts of the field." The dew with its silent influence is the foundation, but the lion with his mighty strength is just as important as the dew. The Christian needs to be as bold as the lion. There are some things you can never reach with the dew. There are some men that you have to deal with in the spirit of the lion. John the Baptist was dew from the Lord with everybody with whom he came in contact; but before Herod, the adulterer, he was a lion. Did he say, I will try and be the dew; I will by my influence seek to bring about a reformation in Herod's character? Not at all. He said, "You are an adulterer, and God will hold you accountable for your sins." Nathan was as the dew working amid the people; but

after David had committed his great sin, did Nathan say, I will try by my influence, by my prayer, by my gentle character, to turn David from his iniquity? Not a bit of it. He went into the presence of the king, accused him of his sin, and said, "Thou art the man." John Knox had great power with men: he was the dew touching others; but John Knox in the presence of "Bloody Mary" was the lion. Luther was as the dew in contact with the people in his every-day character and conversation, but when he stood in the presence of the Pope he was a lion. The Christian Church should be lion as well as dew. Jesus was the Lamb and the Lion. I believe that Anthony Comstock is doing the Lord's work in ridding the stores of bad literature, and taking criminals by the neck and putting them in jail, where they can do no harm. Men we may love, crimes we may hate; men we may try to reach and save them from their sins, while we stand before them as we would stand before Satan himself and denounce their sins. Now, my friends, if you have made up your mind that the liquor traffic is going to be overcome by influence, you were never more mis-

taken in your life. You might just as well talk to a Bengal tiger as with the liquor power of this country. The man who says, "I am praying that this curse may be removed, and I will try to influence the liquor seller by my Christian character," might just as well sing psalms to the Atlantic Ocean. We must stand before them with the lion power that is represented by the ballot—God's substitute for the bayonet. It is your duty before God to see that just laws are made and executed. I know that the Czar of Russia is going to have a hard time of it, if he does not repent. "Before God shall be gathered all nations," and they shall give an account. I am sorry for the Czar of Russia, but we are Czars of the United States, and, if we do not mind, we shall have as hard a time as the Czar of Russia. The Czar makes laws and executes them, and that is what we do. If the kings of this world will have a hard time before the judgment-seat, how will it be with citizens, when all nations stand before God to give account as nations, if we must answer for supporting this nefarious traffic by our silence or our vote?

XXI.

ANGELS AND HORNETS.

"Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared." —EXODUS 23 : 20.

"And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee." —EXODUS 23 : 28.

CANAAN is not a type of heaven. When we shall have reached the golden shore, there will be no Jerichos to conquer and no Canaanites to cast out. Peace will be married to purity, and goodness to glory. The calm surface of the sea of glass will never be ruffled by a storm. The rainbow without cloud around the throne indicates that the mists have rolled away. It will be all singing and no sighing.

But Canaan is rather a symbol of the human soul, which God enters for the purpose of casting out the bad and building up the good. Jordan is not a type of death, but rather a symbol of complete devotement to God. The

Christian bears the relation to Jordan that Cæsar did to the Rubicon and Hernando Cortez did to the ships which he burnt behind him. When Cæsar passed the Rubicon on his way toward Rome, he forever committed himself to conquest or death. After Cortez had destroyed his ships and thus cut himself off from the Old World, there was no return. He must conquer Mexico or be conquered by it. So there is a time in Christian experience when, after having been delivered from the bondage of sin and wandering awhile in uncertainty, there is a consecration to God, a cutting loose from the Wilderness life, and the plunging into the conquest of Canaan. Three things are said about this conquest:

1. There is to be no compromise with the enemy. Israel must not intermarry with the Canaanites. There is to be no partnership with the evil. Every man, woman, and child of sin in our souls must be cast out.

2. This conquest is to be gradual. "Little by little I will drive them out before thee." Sanctification is sudden, and gradual. The moment one is converted, he is set apart to the work of God, as were the holy vessels in

the temple. But there is a gradual entering upon what God has in mind for us. In His view we are sanctified at conversion. In our own experience there is a lifetime of growth. "Little by little" we make the conquest of our souls for Christ. A victory here, another there, and defeat yonder, but all the time making progress until the whole soul-land is subdued.

3. Two of God's agents to assist in this conquest are angels and hornets. He evidently sent a real angel before the Israelites, and the Christian to-day is encompassed with angelic spirits. They are the servants of God to do the bidding of faith. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him." There might have been real hornets sent in such swarms as to drive the people from their homes, and make them take refuge in other lands. The mission of the angel was to lead, to protect, to rebuke, and to bring the people to battle with their enemies; and whatever leads us in the good, protects us from the evil, rebukes us for our sins, is a messenger of God sent to help us make the conquest of ourselves—a true angel.

The mission of the hornet was to make the inhabitants willing to get out. The hornet is too small and weak to overcome by force; it cannot pick up the body and fling it out. By its little sting and the fear of it, it makes men willing to take themselves out. The mosquito drives boarders from the summer hotel, not by main force, but by the annoyance which makes them willing to go. Three policemen went into a station-house in Jersey City some time ago, and finding a man sitting by the stove they asked him what was the matter. "I have the small-pox," he replied; and the policemen departed without being cast out. That man's presence made them willing to leave. And so God sends hornets into the lives of Christians that sting the sins out of their souls; make the evil slough off; make it so disagreeable for the bad that it will not remain in company with the good.

It is our purpose now to look for a moment at the Canaanites of evil, which need to be cast out by means of the angels and hornets which God uses for their expulsion.

I. Unbelief.

Not to believe God is a sin which makes Him a liar. The conviction of this sin is a hornet, which should drive it away. The conscience stings us for unbelief. Sometimes in prayer-meeting we speak of not trusting God, as if it were a small matter: the very thought of it should sting us like a hornet. But the angels which lead faith are the promises. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," was the angel that led me to Jesus.

While Christ was in the garden of Gethsemane, an angel came and ministered unto him. While Peter was in jail with his feet in the stocks, an angel touched him and whispered, "Come with me," and led him out into the open air. You have been in Gethsemanes of sorrow, and it was the angelic touch of some promise that sustained you. You have been in prisons of grief and of doubt, and some precious promise came like an angel with its touch and its whisper, to lead you out to freedom. Thus while the hornet of conviction stings us for unbelief, the angel of promise leads us out into larger faith.

II. Lethargy.

"Why stand ye here all the day idle?" is a hornet to sting us into activity. The tree is known by its fruits, and if you have only leaves, the thought of the Master's coming with His curse should rouse you to do something. But the reward which lies before us is an angel that ought to lead us to do good. We are saved by grace, but rewarded according to our works, and the ringing command comes, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." We may well be impatient to lay up treasures in heaven. I for one would like to die the richest man on earth,—not rich in gold and silver and bonds, but rich in treasures laid up with God. The hope of such reward should lead us to the consecration which never lets a day pass without doing something for Christ. While the fear of barrenness is the hornet's sting, the hope of His "Well done" is the angel's hand.

III. Pride.

"The proud He knoweth afar off." "Pride goeth before a fall." Nebuchadnezzar, who

boasted that he had founded the great Babylon, was brought down to eat grass like the ox. These Scriptures should be hornets to sting pride out of your soul. But the beauty and blessing of humility is an angel that leads us. "Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, and He will exalt you in due time." Be little, like Moses and David, in your own estimation, and you will be great in the esteem of God. Pride weakens, humility strengthens; pride debases, humility exalts; pride blurs, humility beautifies. And yet this peacock in the hearts of others sometimes becomes a very bird of paradise in our own hearts. We are long-sighted as we look at the pride of others, but very near-sighted when we look at our own. Let the angel of God's promise to the humble lead us into a more Christ-like estimation of ourselves.

IV. Impatience.

"Fret not thyself because of evil-doers." "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." Those commands should be hornets to sting impatience out of our lives. Sometimes God sends

severe providences—the very things that would test our patience—in order to rid us of impatience. Rich, prosperous men are usually the most impatient; they cannot brook delay or opposition; but, after adversity comes and they find themselves sitting amid the wreck of their fortunes, patience begins to grow. It is one of the graces made purer in the furnace. The fact that God is not in a hurry, and "he that believeth should not make haste," is an angel to lead patience into full possession of our souls. "Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." When we have done our part, let patience have her perfect work. May the angel of patience lead us!

V. Covetousness.

The fact that covetousness is classed with the worst of sins—idolatry, drunkenness, adultery; the fact that a covetous man should not be a deacon or pastor, nor come to the Lord's Supper, should be a hornet to sting this miserable sin out of our hearts. But the blessedness of liberality is an angel indeed. "It is

more blessed to give than to receive." "The liberal soul shall be made fat." It is so much better to be led by the angel of the joy of giving than driven by the hornet of the fear of covetousness. I have read of an old miser who stood at the door of a humble cottage, and heard a little child crying for bread. He went off and bought some loaves, opened the door, and flung them in. Then he stood for a moment and heard the child thank God for sending bread. He went away with the joy in his heart that he never felt before, and that new joy was to him the beginning of a life of liberal giving. The joy of doing good with his money was an angel that led him out into large conquest over the Canaanites of covetousness and selfishness.

We may sum up all the Canaanites in One Expression—*Love of sin.* The fact that every sin we commit brings guilt, pollution, slavery, with the results in this world and the next, should be a hornet to sting it out of our souls. It is better for a man not to sin, because it is a guilty thing; because it pollutes him; because it enslaves him; because it sends him to hell,—than for him to go on loving

the vile thing regardless of results. But I should rather be led by the angel of purity.

Just as the things we have mentioned are angels or hornets in our lives, so we may become as angels or hornets unto others. As the angel led the Israelites, the good that God introduced into Canaan, so we should be ever ready to lead, to protect, to help on the good forces of earth. Let us ever be on the side of right and opposed to wrong—an angel to the good, a hornet to the bad.

The Gospel has its repulsions as well as its attractions. The rose is protected by the thorn. And there is a great disciplinary power in the Gospel. If it is preached faithfully Sunday after Sunday, it will attract those that love it; it will repel those that hate it: and it is just as much our duty to repel from us those who by their influence would ruin our souls as to attract to us those who by their influence would bless us. Mrs. Bottome says that, when she decided to become a Christian, she went to her friends, and told them that they must not expect her to associate with them any longer; for she believed that their influence for evil over her would be greater than her influence

for good over them. She need not have troubled herself to do this. If she had simply in their presence talked of spiritual things, the love of Christ, His word and work, and had given them to understand that she was now taken up with the service of God rather than the world, this very fact would have been a hornet to sting them off. If you want to get rid of evil companions, you need not order them out of your house. Be Christ-like before them, and they will either be attracted to your Christ-likeness and become Christians, or repelled by it and leave you in safety. It is sweeter, however, to be angels to lead than hornets to repel. By a godly life and words of kindness, we shall lead others in the truly angelic way. Mr. Trumbull, in preaching to the prisoners in a penitentiary in Philadelphia, told them that he sympathized with them, and would like to help them if he could. One poor fellow grasped his hand after the sermon, and told him that those words of sympathy had made him a better man now that he knew somebody cared for him, and he would reform and become a good citizen. A reporter's kind word about a prisoner on trial in New York

led that prisoner to feel that he ought to be a better man. In the home, in the church, in the social circle, in our business associations, we may be angels of God to lead men on to conquest of themselves.

XXII.

VOICES FROM CALVARY.

WHEN men are dying, if their minds are clear, they frequently put into their last sayings the purpose and inspiration of their lives. The last words of our Lord upon the cross are, therefore, intensely interesting. They give us in a nutshell His whole life-purpose. He was the Son of Man, and in a very peculiar sense we died with Him on the cross. His groans were the groans of the race; His words were the cries of humanity to God. A judge in a court of New York gave a verdict in a very important civil suit, and some one who counted the words said that each word in the verdict was worth just a million dollars; and if you will count the words uttered by the Lord Jesus on the cross, you will find that each one of them holds a fortune for every one who will receive it.

Let us stand by the cross and listen to the voices that come from it.

I. We hear, first of all, the Voice of Prayer.

"Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." Christ on the cross is our prayer for forgiveness.

> "Five bleeding wounds he bears,
> Received on Calvary;
> They pour effectual prayers
> And strongly plead for me;
> Forgive him, oh, forgive, they cry,
> Nor let the ransomed sinner die."

And here we may learn how to forgive. Have you any temptation to harbor malice against those who have injured you? Whenever somebody treats you a little worse than they treated Jesus, then you can say, "I shall never forgive." Jesus looked at the best side of even his murderers. "They know not what they do." He sought excuse for them. It is un-Christ-like to look at the bad side of those who have injured us. If you have an enemy on earth, look at the best side of him. If you

have been slandered, try to find some reason for it; persecuted, try to give some excuse for it; and it will not be long before you will be praying "for those who despitefully use you."

II. WE HEAR, AGAIN, THE VOICE OF PROMISE.

"To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." It is only through Christ on the cross that anybody can enter Paradise. Faith in His merit brings peace, comfort, joy. To reject the crucified Christ is to shut yourself out of Paradise here and hereafter. Christ as a teacher unlocks the treasures of wisdom; Christ as a man unlocks the treasures of perfection; Christ on the cross unlocks the treasures of grace and glory. It is only the pierced hands that open heaven to sinners. One Sunday morning there appeared before St. Martin, while he was in prayer, a most radiant form. The form, with a crown of gold upon his head sparkling with diamonds, said: "I am Christ; fall down and worship me." St. Martin looked into the face: it was radiant; he looked at the robe: it was gorgeous; but when he looked at the hands, he saw no marks of the nails, and he said:

"Avaunt, thou devil; though as an angel of light thou hast come, I will not worship thee." Watch for that modern strategy of the devil which brings before men the radiant form of Christ without any print of the nails, that exalts the life of Christ at the expense of His death, and thus leaves out the keystone in the arch of Salvation. Without it the arch cannot stand much of a strain. An engineer took a contract for the building of a bridge in a mountain district, and spent about forty thousand dollars upon it. He had finished one of the arches all except the keystone, and when the hour came for the men to quit work, he said to them: "I should like to have you work four or five hours beyond time to-night, for if I should leave that arch as it is, and the flood should come, all our work will be swept away." But the men said the flood would not come, and, besides, they were not going to work over time. But the flood did come before morning and swept that arch away. It was all right except the keystone, and, lacking the keystone, it lacked everything. Lacking one thing is a great lack when that one thing is life itself. Let no evil spirit, my friend, cajole you into believing that you can

bridge the river of judgment and enter Paradise without the keystone of the sacrifice of Christ.

III. Listen again, and you will hear a Voice Mellow and Sweet as an Angel's Harp. It is the Voice of Natural Affection.

"Woman, behold thy son!" "Behold thy mother!" Christ on the cross has made the Christian home and sanctified the relation of husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister. At the request of Jesus, John took Mary to his home. Indeed, Christ on the cross has made every destitute woman "My mother," and every destitute man "My brother," and every destitute boy "My child." The ancient place, where the family abode, was cheerless and cold. The father was a tyrant, the mother a slave, the children chattels. Canon Farrar has shown that in all classic poetry there is no reference to the pleasures of childhood, and for the very good reason that in pagan lands the child had little pleasure. Mother and home, which we now associate with heaven, were born

of God through the pangs of Christ on the cross. Better still, these sweet relations of the Christian home have been widened until they include the whole family of God. "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father in heaven, the same is My brother, sister, and mother."

During the Civil War a mother heard that her son was sick in a hospital, and she hastened to where he was. But the surgeon said he was too sick to stand the excitement of her visit. She entreated him, however, to let her go and sit by his side, promising not to speak a word. "Well," said the surgeon, "if you will not speak a word, you may go." So she went in and sat by the side of the wounded sleeping boy; but she could not resist the temptation to rub his brow softly. As soon as her hand touched him, he said, "Mother;" he knew the touch. What was it that made him know that touch? It was something that came from Christ on the cross, which had so sanctified the relation of mother and son as to make him carry in mind the memory of her loving touch. Expand this thought till it includes the whole family of God, and you have a slight conception of the unifying and sanctifying power of

the dying Christ. It is unselfish ministry glorified.

IV. The Voice of the Soul's Need.

"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" It is through Jesus Christ on the cross that the voice of the soul in need of God can find utterance. Nothing can satisfy the soul but God. Wealth, position, gratified ambition, will not do it. The infinite God meets our infinite need; through Christ on the cross the need is made known and supplied. Jesus asked a dangerous question: "Why?" But He clung to the Father in love and faithfulness, while He asked it. Christ on the cross is an interrogation point and a period. It appeals to God for a reason for the lonely sufferings of humanity, and is itself an answer to the question. Christ suffers thus that others may not suffer for their sins, and that He may put Himself in loving touch with all who suffer from any cause. Bring all your whys to God through the Crucified, while you cling to Him in love, and He will answer them sooner or later. But I hasten to the next voice—

V. The Voice of Bodily Want.

"I thirst." What! is Christ on the cross a prayer to God for the satisfaction of my physical wants? He is; and that means a great deal to some, whose life is a battle for bread—who know what it is to suffer hunger. It is a great comfort to know that Christ on the cross is the cry of humanity to God for the supply of bodily need. The body is as dear to Him as the soul.

VI. And now, Clear as a Clarion, rings out the Voice of Victory.

"It is finished." "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death;" the suffering of Jesus, when it is finished, brings forth life and victory. Here is our starting-point. We begin at Calvary with victory. He died in our stead, and we shout by faith, "It is finished." Salvation complete is offered to us. And now listen to the definition of the Christian's death as it comes to us from the cross: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." The darkened scene, symbol of the darkened soul;

the cries of anguish, forsaken of God—that is death. But the Christian has not to die. Christ died for him. He simply commends his spirit to God. To him

> "There is no death: what seems so is transition;
> This life of mortal breath
> Is but the suburb of the life elysian,
> Whose portal we call death."

The death of Jesus is truly the death of death. Ours is a "departure," and the word means loosing anchor that the ship may sail out of a landlocked harbor into a broader sea.

XXIII.

CHRIST'S EARTHLY GLORY.

"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory."—JOHN 2 : 11.

A STUDY of this miracle will give us a glimpse of the true glory of our Lord while upon earth.

I. WE SEE THE GLORY OF HIS SOCIAL NATURE.

Jesus was no ascetic. He did not shut Himself between four walls, barring out the world. He was truly in the world, though not of it. While bearing the sorrows of the community, He shared equally their joys. He broke up several funerals, but never a feast. He promoted the right kind of festivity. He came to increase our joys and diminish our sorrows, and He knows as no other does how to make

our very sorrows channels of joy. We are not surprised, therefore, to find Him at a marriage feast mingling with the people, and showing forth the glory of His social nature.

The world gets the social power of many Christians. They give to God their hearts, they say, their money, much of their time, but their environment compels them to yield the tribute of their social influence to the world. The social life of every Christian should show forth the glory of Christ.

II. We see the Glory of His Power.

It was quietly displayed; no outward show. He simply willed, and it was done. "The conscious water saw its Lord and blushed." Such is the glory of Christ's power to-day. It displays itself not in the tempest, the earthquake, or the fire, but in the still small voice. The great powers of nature are invisible and inaudible. We wonder at thundering Niagara, and yet the vital forces of the forest draw upward many times more water than pours over Niagara Falls. The quiet working of nature that lifts the clouds and distils the rain, giv-

ing life and beauty to meadow, field, and flower, displays the true glory of God. The heavens declare His glory by quietly shining, and the firmament showeth His handiwork without making ado over it.

III. We see the Glory of His Sympathy.

Sympathy with the embarrassed and perplexed. Here was a family with more guests than they expected, and their supplies ran short. The Lord comes just in time to relieve their embarrassment. It suggests to us that Christ is ever sympathetic with the little worries and perplexities of life. It is easier to bear a great calamity than these little irritations. I venture to say that one of you wives could bear the death of your child with more equanimity than you could endure the embarrassment which your husband would bring upon you by coming in just at dinner-time with several prominent friends, for whom you were not prepared. Now, would it not be difficult to show yourself amiable and gentle under such circumstances? Stanley says that he did not fear the lions and elephants of the African

forest as much as the "jiggers" and the ants. They killed more men than the savages. We have read of a battle against cannibals gained by the use of tacks. They had taken possession of a whaling vessel and bound the man who was left in care of it. The crew, on returning, saw the situation, and scattered upon the deck of the vessel the tacks, which penetrated the bare feet of the savages, and sent them howling into the sea. They were ready to meet lance and sword, but they could not overcome the tacks on the floor. We brace ourselves up against great calamities. The little tacks of life, scattered along our way, piercing our feet and giving us pain, are hard to bear. A prominent pastor in Brooklyn was absorbed studying the question of socialism, when his wife came in with despair on her face, and said she wanted advice about the servants. "Oh, my dear," he replied, "I cannot give my time to little matters like domestic service. I am trying to solve the social problem of the universe." "Well," replied the wife, "you solve the problem in the kitchen, and I will promise you to solve the problem of the universe in twenty-four hours." Really, it

is easier to dispose of these great questions which cover the world than it is to meet and successfully overcome the little worries which present themselves day by day.

IV. We see the Glory of His Method.

The world's method is to give the best wine first and keep the worst for the last. We see that in the experience of the drunkard. He has a time of jollity and what he calls happiness for a few years, but the end is delirium tremens, death; the good wine first and the bad last. How forcibly this was illustrated in the life of Landseer, the great animal-painter —a man before whose works of genius people in the art galleries of Europe stand to-day in rapt admiration! Near the close of his life he went around from place to place with swollen nose and bleared eyes, the pity of friends and the scorn of enemies. Byron gave the world's version when he wrote:

> "My days are in the yellow leaf:
> The flower, the fruit of life is gone;
> The worm, the canker, and the grief
> Are mine alone."

"Beau Brummel" put it in not quite so poetical a form when, after he had danced with princesses and frittered away his life, he pointed to a dog lying in the sun, and said, "I wish I was that dog." These men of the world had the good wine first and the bitter dregs last. Christ may require of us self-denial, toil, struggle, patience. There may come into our lives sickness and death. We may have truly a hard time of it; but, depend upon it, the good time will come to the Christian, and these severe experiences will make the coming glory all the brighter. In what striking contrast with the sentiments of Byron and Brummel is the experience of Paul: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness"! The "henceforth" is the Christian's good wine. His life may be a battle to fight, a race to run, a charge to keep; but victory will crown the battle: the prize is at the end of the race, and the "Well done" from the Master's lips will make us glad that we kept the charge He committed to us.

XXIV.

GOD'S IDEAL OF CHARACTER.

"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."—MATT. 3 : 17.

THERE is a lake in Switzerland in which the traveller may see reflected trees and houses in the distance that are themselves out of sight. Jesus Christ is God brought down to our level—God made thinkable, put within the compass of our highest thought. The very highest thought of man is man. We try to think of something higher, and we make it a monster. We think of angels, and they are men; and there isn't any conception that we are capable of higher than man. God puts Himself within our highest conception that He may be thinkable to us, and thus brought near. He is a Spirit. Well, I cannot think pure spirit. As soon as I try, it assumes a ghostly shape. It must have some tangible form. But I can think a

man; I have some conception of the human form, the human attributes, human thought, feeling, affection, and motive. So that God puts Himself within the compass of our conception by becoming incarnate in Jesus Christ. But Christ is more than God; He is a man—not God humanized, nor man deified, but God and man; and I am permitted to think of Him as man just as truly as if He were not God, and as God just as truly as if He were not man. As God He is the Wonder-worker, and when I need His omnipotent power I come to Him as God. As man He is the Sympathizer, bearing our infirmities; and when I need sympathy I come to Him as man. We have in the text God's ideal of character; in looking down upon this character-picture, reflected in the lake of humanity, He sees that in it which pleases Him: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

I. His Ideal of Purity.

"Such an High Priest became us who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."

The microscopic view of His enemies was placed upon Him, His friends studied Him, and all agree with Pilate when he says, "I find no fault in Him." He was pure, and it was not the kind of purity that has to be treated like a hot-house plant—put away in a cell to keep the weather from it: it was a purity that came in contact with impurity; that could stand the test of exposure. He was not a man of books; He never wrote a book. He was a man of men. He was a man that touched bad men, and lost His very reputation from the fact that He was a friend of publicans and sinners. He stood not only the test of contact,—a great Gulf Stream flowing through an ocean of pollution without mingling with its waters,—but He stood the fire test. You cannot tell whether gold is pure or not by just touching it, but, to test its purity, you must put it in the furnace. Jesus Christ for forty days was put in the furnace—shall I say, of perdition?—with the engineer of the bottomless pit to keep hot the fires, and no dross was found. Now, if you try to imitate me, ten to one you will see all my faults before you see any virtues. We can catch the

discord better than the harmonies; and the old gnarl on the tree will attract more attention than the most beautiful symmetry of trunk and branches.

I remember hearing a sermon once on the resurrection of Christ. It was a hot August evening, and right in the midst of the sermon a black beetle came through the window, lighted on the preacher's forehead, and remained there twenty minutes. That is all of the sermon I remember to this day—the black beetle on the man's forehead! It was the only bad thing about it, but it attracted more attention than all the good. There is no bad in Christ, to divert our attention; so that we may exert all the powers within us to attain the good. The perfection of the Model inspires us to try to reach it.

A little company of us climbed a hill near Asheville, N. C. We soon became weary and sat down to rest. Another party of us climbed Black Mountain, nine hours of struggle over stones and through the roughest paths in all the mountains; and yet we did not feel much wearied, because we had before us the prospect of such a view as no poet

ever sang and no painter's brush ever portrayed. The grandeur of the scene before us inspired us to greater effort.

II. Christ is God's Ideal of Sympathy.

He sympathized with the sorrowful. He wept with Mary and Martha at the grave of Lazarus. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and He understood the sorrow of every heart as you and I cannot.

I tried this afternoon to comfort a poor wife whose husband had committed suicide; but my words to her were cold, and she turned around and said, "My dear man, you don't know anything about it," while she shrieked and tore her hair with a grief that I never felt. She told the truth: I did not know anything about it. But I could tell her of Jesus, who did know all about it.

Jesus is sympathetic, not only with our sorrows, but our joys. He went to the marriage feast as readily as to the funeral. His heart was warm toward rich and poor. He was not repelled by the blind beggar, so ragged that he threw aside his old cloak as he came into

His presence. With the young man of wealth, well dressed, the culture of the times in his face and on his lip, Jesus is just as sympathetic. Looking upon the crowd as sheep having no shepherd, He had compassion; and after midnight till one, two, and three o'clock in the morning, He sits by the side of a learned Jewish rabbi, explaining to him the way of life, sympathizing with his struggles and his doubts. He sympathized with the ignorant and with the learned. He loved people; He was "the Son of Man," the Son of humanity; and as such He is our model of sympathy.

III. We have in Christ God's Ideal of Prayerfulness.

He prayed on the Mount of Transfiguration, and while He prayed the form of His countenance was changed, as light streamed from it. It was just before a great exaltation. He prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, and while He prayed the form of His countenance was again changed, as sorrow and bloody sweat streamed from it. He prayed in the sunlight,

He prayed under the cloud: and you and I need most to pray when we are depressed, and when we are exalted; when we are apt to despair, and when we are apt to get proud. In the valley amid the shadows, and on the mountain-top amid the gleams of glory, we need most to be prayerful. If any man on earth could afford to live without prayer, it was Christ. But He prayed, because as a man He needed what only prayer could bring; and there was no make-believe about it. That scene in the garden was no tragedy acted merely for our instruction. It was real prayer, and in answer to it He received from the Father the ministry of angels He needed.

IV. We have also in Christ God's Ideal of Greatness.

We know what the world calls greatness. Cæsar was great, because he laid all the world under tribute. Napoleon was great, because in his day he was the most powerful man living. Men are great who rise above others; great in proportion to the number of other men that they can make their servants. Who is the

greatest politician in New York? The man who can influence the most men at the polls. Who is the greatest statesman in the United States? The man that wields the greatest power for any idea or political party. Who is the greatest man financially? The man that has the most dollars, with which he can wield an influence almost irresistible. What the world calls greatness is getting above people, and making them tributary to us.

On the other hand, the greatness that Jesus Christ sets before us is not rising above men, but getting under men and lifting them up. It is not making other men tributary to us, but it is our becoming tributary to other men. The greatness Jesus Christ taught is in proportion to the ministry that we render to others, and not to the ministers that we make to ourselves. "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." "If any man would be great among you, let him become the servant of all."

I should like to strike a keynote just here for church work. What is the mission of a church? Is it to help other people or to get other people to help it?

Longfellow's "Excelsior" is good enough poetry, but I never did sympathize very much with that fellow for freezing to death on the mountain-side while trying to climb above others. If he had been striving to lift somebody else, it would have made his blood circulate better, and kept him alive.

You may have seen a blind man standing on a street corner in New York, selling papers. A gentleman passing by one day met a ragged newsboy with a bundle of papers in his hand, right near this old blind man's stand. "I want a paper," he said to the boy. "I can't sell you any papers here," replied the urchin. "Why not?" asked the man. "Because this is Blindy's corner." He went up and bought a paper from the blind man, and then turned to the boy and said, "Why is it that you will not sell me a paper?" "Well," said he, "it is just this: we boys got together, and we said that Blindy could not work for himself, and we passed a resolution that, if any boy sold a paper there, we would lick him; he has got to have that corner for himself." I don't know where that boy goes to Sunday-school; I don't know his mother; but I know one thing—he is

greater in the estimation of Christ than the men who have become famous by their selfish grasping.

We see the Climax of this Greatness in Jesus Christ on the Cross.

"Why," said an infidel to me, "you tell me that God can be pleased with that bloody scene on the cross. I could not be pleased to look upon my only child suffer thus, and I am not nearly as perfect as God." My reply was: "Friend, I could not love or respect a God that would not be pleased with such a scene as that." Let me illustrate. You remember that scene in a German village: A blacksmith could be seen hour after hour, if you had looked through his shop window, chained to the anvil, foaming at the mouth, while the blood ran from his wrists. He was writhing in madness. That was indeed horrible. I would fain forget it. But I learn that the good blacksmith was sitting one day in the village post-office, with his neighbors' children gathered around him, when a great mad dog with foaming mouth and glaring eyes appeared

in the door. He springs up and throttles the infuriated beast, but not until the fatal poison goes into his own blood. When I have learned that the noble man put the chains upon his own hands as a protection to his neighbors, my horror turns into admiration, and I should like to build the blacksmith a monument higher than Napoleon's in Paris.

I read in a chapter of Italian history of a poor girl in a dungeon, on a damp floor, in a dark room, with scanty fare, her life ebbing out. One year she stays, three years she stays, six years she stays; and after the sixth year there is a corpse on the marble floor. They throw it into a box and bury it in a potter's field. It horrifies me, but when I turn over a page I read that the girl was sent to prison because she had a secret she would not divulge, and that the first day of every month an officer of the government would come in and say: "If you will give us the secret we know you possess, we will set you free." But she steadfastly refused. What was the secret? It was connected with the honor and the life of her own beloved father; and for his sake she lingered and died upon the marble floor in the

dark room. Now I feel that I should like to build a monument to the noble Italian girl higher and grander than St. Peter's Cathedral.

I look upon another scene: the mocking; the crown of thorns; the weakened body bearing a heavy cross, and sinking beneath it—hands and feet adjusted, while the nails are driven, crushing through, the broken heart crying out: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" As I look, the elements grow dark and an earthquake shakes the earth. I can but say, "That is horrible." I am not pleased with it. But when I turn over the page and read that it was not for Himself, but for other people, that that crown of thorns was worn, that the heavy cross was borne, that His feet and hands were pierced, and that heart was broken; and when, reading a little further, I find that not for people in general, but for me, was all this suffered,—my horror turns to admiration, adoration, love, and my enthusiasm knows no bounds.

Shall I go to the village in Germany and ask the parents of the children saved from the mad dog what they think of the memory of the blacksmith; shall I go to Italy and ask

the father for whom that noble girl died what he thinks of her who sacrificed her life for him,—and will they be base enough to refuse to express their gratitude?

The cross, with its agony, holds before us the climax of true greatness. A God that could look upon it and not be pleased would be unworthy of the respect, much less the love, of noble minds.

More than that, friends: if you accept the principle of my infidel acquaintance, you will go to Washington and tear down that monument, over five hundred feet high, as you shout: "Blot out the memory of Washington! Forget the deeds of the men that died in the Revolution! Let all martyrs be forgotten! Let the names of those that shaped this government, and gave us religious and civil liberty, be no more remembered!" We are living upon the fruits of their suffering, upon the results of their heroic self-denial. Worse still: if you make up your mind never to live upon the suffering of others, you will never think with gratitude even of your mother.

But, if what I have said is true, I am lost; there is no hope for me. Only the kind of

purity and sympathy and prayerfulness and greatness that is manifest in Jesus Christ can ever please God. I am not holy, I am selfish, and I am not so prayerful as I ought to be; I am not in sympathy with all men, like Him: and if I must bring to God a character as spotless and as sympathetic and unselfish as the character of Jesus Christ, there is no hope for me for this world or the next. Yet as I reflect I am cheered, because God tells me that I can bring before Him the character of Christ; if I will bring in the arms of my faith His ideal, He will accept me.

I come, pleading God's own ideal of character; if I will be pleased with what pleases Him, He will be pleased with me; He will put the merit of His ideal to my account, and He will begin at once to lift me toward the realization of His ideal.

A lady said to me: "I am not satisfied with myself. I have been praying and weeping and seeking rest, but all to no purpose." "Are you satisfied with the Lord Jesus?" I asked. She said, "Certainly." "Well," said I, "you and I belong to the same company—dissatisfied with ourselves, but satisfied with

the Lord; and if I know anything about it, that is salvation."

By and by God will look on us, and be pleased, not simply because we are pleased with what pleases Him, but because of what we are. He will make real in us His ideal in Christ. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is"—*not as He was.* Some of us are a little like Him as He was—the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. But the promise is that we shall be like Him as He is—not the sufferer on the cross, but the God-man on the throne. "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is;" and, I submit, that is a prospect worthy of our constant thought and our brightest hope.

The other day I went to see a working-man about forty-five years of age. I said: "Are you a Christian?" He replied: "Yes, I have been trusting the Lord for about thirty years." "Bright, is it?" "Bright as the promise of God; but I am in great suffering," and he turned over from me, excruciating agony filling every part of his nervous system until he could

hardly endure it. He said: "I am in pain, sir, but I have the peace that passeth understanding. My infidel doctor came in yesterday, and said: 'There is no hope, sir. I have done everything I can for you.' I said: 'Doctor, your no hope is the brightest hope I ever had; sure as you live, sir, that is the sweetest sentence you ever spoke at my bedside. I have been lying here in pain. In a few days, if you are right, I will be beyond the reach of pain.'" The infidel's no hope at death is the dawning of hope to every Christian man; it is the dawning of the hope, bright as heaven, that the character of Jesus Christ, God's ideal, is certain to be ours by and by.

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